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SOUND REASON

AND

SOLID ARGUMENT

FOR

A Reform in Parliament;

AND THE

ABOLITION OF BRIBERY, CORRUPTION,
ROTTEN BOROUGHs, AND OTHER
ABUSES:

 *H. Lennox (C.)*
His Grace the Duke of RICHMOND,
His Grace the Duke of PORTLAND,
The Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT,
Chancellor of the Exchequer, First Lord of the Treasury
&c.

And Others.

Containing a perfect Account of all Meetings, Resolutions,
Speeches, &c. &c. for upwards of Twenty Years past;
as also the various Speeches in Parliament on those Sub-
jects; with Mr. Pitt's Speech of May 18, 1782.

"The matter of complaint is clear to me; and I am strengthened
"in opinion from the advice of some of the first and greatest cha-
"racters in the kingdom. It was also the opinion of many respectable
"characters now no more; and particularly of one, of whom every
"member of this House can speak with more freedom than myself.
"That person (the Earl of Chatham) was not apt to indulge vague
"and chimerical speculations, inconsistent with practice and expedi-
"ency. I personally know that it was the opinion of this person,
"that without recurring to first principles in this respect, and establishing
"a more solid and equal representation of the people, by which the pro-
"per constitutional connection should be revived, this nation, with
"the best capacities for grandeur and happiness of any on the face
"of the earth, must be confounded with the mass of those whose
"liberties were lost in the corruption of the people!"

Mr. Pitt's Speech, May 18, 1782.

L O N D O N :

Printed for and sold by D. I. EATON, No. 74, Newgate-street.

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

IT has almost universally been agreed, that Britain is endowed by nature with every requisite to render its inhabitants a peculiarly happy people: the fertility of its soil almost insures them abundance; the mildness of the climate renders it salubrious and delightful; whilst its insular situation produces a continual increase of wealth, and defends them from the attacks of rival nations.

Our poets describe Britain as the most highly favoured of all sub-lunary abodes; and our more sober historians and politicians describe its resources as inexhaustible, and its wealth and prosperity as unequalled by any other nation of the world.—Queen of Isles! Mistress of the World! how can thy children fail to be the most blessed of mankind? To them, distress and poverty must be entirely unknown: every one must enjoy a fair proportion of those comforts, which are the produce of his labours; every youth must be well informed in the duties he owes to himself and his neighbour; and every aged citizen, who has expended his years in constant toil, be secured, by an honorable provision, from the insult of a scanty eleemosynary support. But, alas! the real situation of Englishmen but little resembles so pleasing a painting. Whilst one class revels in all the luxuries of life, millions of another class, neglected from their birth, are allowed to degenerate to a state but little above brutality itself. The children of the poor are trained in the same paths of ignorance and vice which have been trod by their wretched parents. Cruel neglect, or a diabolical policy, devotes them to a vile and abject state, in which they become the ready slaves of their wealthy tyrants. Cunning has taught these, that the ignorance of the common people prevents their reflecting on their real importance in society; and that, by a Draconian system of laws, their criminal indulgencies may be restrained from passing farther than the degree necessary to their degradation. Innumerable privileges of the rich necessarily attract to their hoards the wealth of their country, whilst the hands of the poor are employed to heap them up. Unable to taste the bread which their own hands have sown, they behold their oppressors rioting in an abundance flowing from the inexhaustible funds of *unmerited pensions, exorbitant salaries, sinecure places, loans, jobs, and contracts.* For “Corruption and extravagance must naturally keep pace with public poverty and wretchedness.”

To point out the origin of this monstrous dominion of the rich over the poor is not difficult. It proceeds from the machinations of a succession of venal Parliaments, where the rich only have nominated the legislators, and where, consequently, the laws have been made by the rich alone; where the poor have had no voice, and from the edicts of which they have no successful appeal. It must be sufficiently obvious to every candid observer, that “the present inadequate representation, and the long duration of Parliaments, destroy that balance which, by our constitution, should subsist between the three estates of the Legislature, and render the Commons’ House independent of the people; procure certain majorities in favour of every administration, and threaten either an absolute monarchy, or that still more odious government, a tyrannical aristocracy.”

To

(O) THE PUBLIC

To obtain a substantial reform in Parliament, by which the people may possess that influence in the legislature of the nation, which, according to the principles of our constitution, is their due, and thereby procure the removal of the numerous evils under which the nation groans, has been repeatedly attempted within these last twenty years. Numerous associations have been held, and various petitions have for this purpose been presented. Men of real patriotism have endeavoured to promote a reformation with a zeal which must ever endear them to their countrymen; and the creatures of ambition and corruption have manifested the appearance of the greatest earnestness in the same cause, by which they have snatched a temporary popularity, just sufficient to enable them to step into the seat of power, to insult and oppress those they had so successfully deluded. There hardly is to be found a man in the present tyrannic administration, who has not at a convenient time played off the farce of a pretended detestation of what he has termed a corrupt and mock representation.

Since the people may perhaps be again and again tantalized by the cant of villains, who, for their own emolument, may start forth as the champions of freedom, it is well they should see the language of his Grace the Duke of Richmond, and the spirit of those associations which have been directed by the councils of his Grace of Richmond, his Grace the Duke of Portland, and the Right Honorable William Pitt. The present collection will shew what were once the avowed opinions of those, under whose directions honest men have been put to the bar of the Old Bailey, for endeavouring to obtain a constitutional reform in the Commons' House of Parliament. The reader will perceive that the present malignant persecutors of every friend of Liberty and Reform were once Members of A CORRESPONDING SOCIETY, and were associated with those who not only resolved to form A GRAND NATIONAL CONVENTION, but who even recommended every Housekeeper to provide himself with proper ARMS, such as MUSKET and BAYONET, and to be READY and EXPERT in the use of them, in case of any invasion of our RIGHTS and LIBERTIES.

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"When a House of Commons abounds with placemen, the people will be apt to ask such questions as—WHETHER a Parliament filled with delinquents will ever call themselves to an account, or what account would be given if they should? WHETHER an assembly of public robbers will sentence one another to be punished or to make restitution? WHETHER it is possible those grievances can be redressed, which are committed by persons from whom there is no higher power to appeal? WHETHER there is any hope of justice where the malefactors are the judges? WHETHER his Majesty can be rightly advised in affairs relating to himself or the public, when they are represented to him only by such persons who design to abuse him? WHETHER the public accounts will be faithfully inspected by those who embezzle our money to their own use? WHETHER the King's prerogative can be lawfully maintained by such, who only pervert it to their own sinister ends and purposes? WHETHER a Parliament can be a true balance, where all the weights lie in one scale? or WHETHER a House of Commons can vote freely who are either prepossessed with the hopes and promises of enjoying places, or the slavish fears of losing them?"

The Art of Governing by Parties.

PETITIONS, INSTRUCTIONS, &c. &c.

FOR OBTAINING A

REFORM IN PARLIAMENT.

A Very numerous meeting of the Freeholders of the county of Middlesex was held on September 25, 1775, at the Mile-End Assembly-room; and, after some time spent in deliberation, the following Instructions to their Representatives were unanimously agreed to.

Instructions from the Freeholders of the County of Middlesex, to the Right Honourable JOHN WILKES and JOHN GLYNN, Esquires, Knights of the Shire for the County of Middlesex.

"WE, the freeholders of the county of Middlesex, summoned here by public advertisement of the sheriff of this county, acknowledge our approbation and grateful sense of your conduct as our Representatives during the last session of Parliament; and though we have no reason to doubt your steady perseverance in the true interests of your country, yet we think it our indispensable duty to acquaint you with our sentiments at the present awful crisis, big with the fate of this great empire, and the happiness, glory, and prosperity, of the whole people.

"We behold, with all the horror and grief natural to a free people, the fatal stab given to our excellent Constitution, by a majority of the last *venal* parliament, whereby the most sacred and unalienable right of the freeholders of this county, the right of election, was in the most impious manner wrested from the electors, and assumed by the elected, who placed a person as our representative in Parliament, contrary to the sense and will of the county, expressed by a very great majority of legal votes, thereby establishing a *precedent* of the most dangerous tendency to the rights of all the electors of Great Britain; which injury has been again confirmed by the malice of our inveterate enemies, in the present Parliament (chosen by surprise under a national delusion), suffering that vote to appear in their journals, a standing record of the *injustice, venality, and corruption*, of their predecessors.

"We are called upon to redouble our attention and zeal for the defence and preservation of *all* our constitutional rights, from seeing the iron hand of Oppression extended to our fellow-subjects on the other side of the Atlantic; *Popery*, that bane of civil and religious liberty, established in an extent of country infinitely larger than all our possessions in Europe, thereby arming, as it were, many of our fellow-subjects with the *crucifix* in one hand, and a *dagger* in the other, against our Protestant brethren; a *Popish Bishop* appointed, and the greatest comfort and encouragement given to the clergy of that church, while the pastors of our own pure and excellent faith are suffered to remain without support and provision, but what *Romish* priests and *Romish* councils shall

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deign to afford them; other *cruel* and *oppressive* acts passed against our fellow-subjects in America, wholly repugnant to the ancient, just, and generous proceedings of British Councils and British Assemblies, destructive of that glory of the English law, the trial by jury, and many other undoubted rights and privileges of English subjects! in violation of Charters and Royal Covenants of the most solemn nature, which acts and oppressions, under the influence of the present ministers, have been productive of a most impolitic, unnatural, cruel, and destructive civil war, against our suffering and much injured fellow-subjects in America.

"We lament, as a commercial people, the inevitable injuries that must be sustained by the loss of a most valuable branch of our commerce, the decay of trade and manufactures, and consequent distresses of the industrious poor.

"To remedy all these evils, the melancholy experience of past times evincing how insufficient is the removal of a ministry, while their maxims and views are entailed upon the government, We desire that you will not only continue strenuously to oppose them, but endeavor to procure us such constitutional security, **BY SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS**, and enacting such other laws as may prevent the nation from suffering by the like **ERRORS** and **INQUIRIES** for the future.

"And we instruct you to exert yourselves in procuring that vote of the late House of Commons to be rescinded, which in the most injurious and unconstitutional manner deprived the freeholders of this country of their undoubted right of election.

"We also instruct you, to forward an enquiry into the expenditure of the public treasure, so peculiarly necessary at this time, and in a nation burdened with taxes, and oppressed with debts; that you will not suffer the people to be imposed on by the flimsy artifices of a minister, pretending to lessen, while he is, in reality, increasing the public burthens.

"Should any additional land-tax or new impost be proposed in the ensuing session, we expect that you will not assent to them without a previous redress of grievances; and that you will strenuously oppose all votes of credit, or taking any foreign troops into the pay of Great Britain, unless another attempt should be made by *Tories* and *Jacobites* against his Majesty's person, family, or government.

"The state of the navy, that great bulwark, safety, and protection, of the commerce of this nation demands, and we hope will engage your serious attention; and that you will enquire by what fatal mismanagement and corrupt influence, after such immense sums have been voted during a peace-establishment, that it is in its present deplorable condition.

"We particularly instruct you to exert yourselves in preventing the further effusion of the blood of our innocent fellow-subjects in America, and to put a speedy end to the present unnatural and ruinous civil war.

"We also desire you to use your unwearied endeavors to assist and support the Representatives of the city of London for obtaining a repeal of every obnoxious and unconstitutional act, and in bringing to the justice of their country the advisers of such nefarious measures as have been adopted during the last fourteen years, tending to *subvert* the Constitution of this country, and which we are convinced will very soon effect the ruin and destruction of the British empire."

York, December 30, 1779.

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting, of the first persons of consideration and property in this county, held here this day, the following Petition and Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.
The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of York,

Sheweth,

That this nation hath been engaged for several years in a most expensive and unfortunate war; that many of our valuable colonies, having actually declared themselves independent, have formed a strict confederacy with France and Spain, the dangerous and inveterate enemies of Great Britain; that the consequence of those combined misfortunes has been a large addition to the national debt, a heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of the kingdom.

Alarmed at the diminished resources and growing burthens of this country, and convinced that rigid frugality is now indispensibly necessary in every department of the state, your Petitioners observe with grief, that notwithstanding the calamities and impoverished condition of the nation, much public money has been improvidently squandered, and that many individuals enjoy *sinecure places*, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service, to a large and still increasing amount: whence the Crown has acquired a great unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, may soon prove fatal to the liberties of this country.

Your Petitioners conceiving that the true end of every legitimate government is NOT the *emolument* of ANY INDIVIDUAL, but the *welfare of the Community*; and considering that by the Constitution of this realm the national purse is entrusted in a peculiar manner to the custody of this honorable House, beg leave further to represent, that until effectual measures be taken to redress the oppressive grievances herein stated, the grant of an additional sum of public money, beyond the produce of the present taxes, will be injurious to the rights and property of the People, and derogatory from the honor and dignity of Parliament.

Your Petitioners, therefore, appealing to the justice of this honorable House, do most earnestly request, that before any new burthens are laid upon this country, effectual measures may be taken by this House to enquire into, and correct, the gross abuses in [the expenditure of public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments; to rescind and abolish all *sinecure places* and *unmerited pensions*; and to appropriate the produce to the necessities of the state, in such manner as to the wisdom of Parliament shall seem meet.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

After which the following Resolutions were proposed, and also unanimously agreed to, *viz.*

1. Resolved,

1. Resolved, That the ~~Petition now read to this meeting~~, addressed to the House of Commons, and requesting that before any new burthens be laid upon the country, effectual measures may be taken by that House to enquire into and correct the gross abuses in the expenditure of public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments; to rescind and abolish all sinecure places and unmerited pensions; and to appropriate the produce to the necessities of the state, is approved by the meeting.

2. Resolved, That a COMMITTEE of sixty-one Gentlemen be appointed to carry on the NECESSARY CORRESPONDENCE for effectually promoting the object of the Petition, and to prepare a plan of an ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support the *laudable Reform*, and such other measures as may conduce to RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT.

At a meeting of the freeholders of Middlesex, on January, 1780, a similar petition was agreed on.

CHESTER, Jan. 13, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders, of the county palatine of Chester, the following Petition was unanimously agreed to.

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.
The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County Palatine of Chester,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, having taken into consideration the distressed state of this once flourishing empire, humbly beg leave to represent to Parliament, that under the many and heavy burdens with which your Petitioners have been loaded, they cannot but observe with concern, that no attempt has yet been made to reduce unnecessary expences, either by the abolition of sinecure offices and unmerited pensions, or by any other means whatever; so that while the landholder, merchant, and every other description of independent men in this country, are every day feeling the distresses of this unfortunate war; the placeman and pensioner are the only persons exempted from the general calamity.

Your Petitioners, therefore, implore Parliament, that they will not grant any farther taxes, before a strict attention to œconomy, and a *plan for the reduction of all places of exorbitant emolument, and the abolition of sinecure offices and unmerited pensions* be adopted, and that the savings arising therefrom be applied to the expences of carrying on the war against the house of Bourbon, and other exigencies of the state.

Your Petitioners also consider it impossible for our happy Constitution to exist, UNLESS PARLIAMENT BE INDEPENDENT; and we cannot but feel the utmost uneasiness at those symptoms that have appeared to the contrary, and which prove the necessity of *excluding* certain

certain descriptions of *placemen, pensioners, and contractors*. We also hope Parliament will take some measures to check the interference of ministers in the election of members to serve in Parliament.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

[*The Petition and Resolutions of the County of Hertford are the same as those of York.*]

SUSSEX. Jan. 20, 1780.

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting of Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of the county of Sussex, the following Petition was proposed and agreed to.

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Noblemen, Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of the County of Sussex,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners cannot view the rapid decline of the British empire, without calling upon this honorable House, by every tie of honor, interest, and religion, to avert the ruin that menaces this lately prosperous and happy nation, by a timely exertion of those powers with which, by the Constitution, this honorable House is invested.

That among the many causes which have contributed to produce our present calamitous situation (all of which, we trust, this honorable House will speedily investigate and redress), your Petitioners beg leave to point out the neglect of public economy as a grievance which is capable of receiving, and stands in need of, immediate remedy.

That your Petitioners conceive the system of *chance*, as at present established, to be of most ruinous tendency; the national debt being thereby so greatly augmented during war, and so little reduced during peace, that it increases without end, and cannot therefore be supported by any finite, much less by diminished, resources.

That your Petitioners are alarmed by the practice of Government, in laying *FALSE ESTIMATES* before Parliament, by those estimates being constantly exceeded, and the passing the public accounts inconceivably delayed for many years by the extravagant waste of public money, the existence of pensions unmerited by public service, and the continuance of sinecure places and exorbitant emoluments of office, to an immense and still increasing amount.

Your Petitioners therefore lament, the disuse of the ancient practice of appointing Commissioners of Accounts from time to time, for the examination of the public expenditure, which might have prevented the growth of these evils.

THAT YOUR PETITIONERS BELIEVE THAT THE UN-DUE INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN, DERIVING ITS GREATEST SUPPORT FROM THE UNCONTROULED POSSESSION OF THE PUBLIC PURSE, IS A PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF OUR PRESENT CALAMITIES, AND IS HIGHLY DANGEROUS TO LIBERTY.

That

That your Petitioners think it their duty to acquaint this honorable House with the distresses which your Petitioners feel from the losses in trade, the decay of manufactures, the diminished value of lands, the high price of money, and the increase of taxes; they are so universal and so heavy, that unless the utmost frugality be exerted to keep our burthens within the strict limits of necessity, it will be impossible for the people to support those extraordinary exertions, which a vigorous prosecution of the war against France and Spain may require.

Your Petitioners, therefore, humbly pray, and firmly expect, that this honorable House, in discharge of the high trust reposed in them, will take effectual measures that money supplied with so much difficulty from the private fortune or industry of the subject, may be faithfully and frugally applied to the purposes for which it is granted; that such regulations may be established as shall bring the public expenditure to speedy and strict account; and that some plan for the reduction of all exorbitant emoluments of office, and the abolition of all sinecure places and unmerited pensions be adopted.

That by these means the *dangerous and unconstitutional influence of the Crown* may be diminished, and the burdens of the people alleviated.

And your Petitioners further pray, that no fresh supplies may be granted, or new taxes laid on the subject, until these, their just grievances, are redressed, in such manner as to the wisdom and justice of this honorable House shall seem meet.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

After which the following Resolutions were proposed and unanimously agreed to.

1. Resolved, That the members of this county be requested to present this Petition.
2. Resolved, That it be recommended by this meeting to every individual in this county, who wishes for a continuation of the *liberties of the nation*, to subscribe this Petition.
3. Resolved, That a Committee be appointed for giving every legal and constitutional support to this Petition.

The said Committee to consist of the following gentlemen, viz.

William Frankland, Esq. DUKE OF RICHMOND, Lord Egremont, Lord Abergavenny, Lord George Lenox, and others.

4. Resolved, That the said Committee be desired to write to every member of Parliament representing the city and borough of this county, to solicit their support in Parliament to this Petition.

5. Resolved, That the said Committee be requested to consider of and prepare a PLAN FOR A GENERAL ASSOCIATION of this county, for supporting the grounds of this Petition, and for RESTORING INDEPENDENCY TO PARLIAMENT.

6. Resolved, That the said Committee be desired to CORRESPOND with the Committees of other counties for this purpose.

7. Resolved, That seven of the said Committee do constitute a quorum; that they do meet this evening, and have power to adjourn, from time to time, as they shall think proper.

8. Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to his Grace the DUKE OF RICHMOND, for calling this meeting.

SURREY. Jan. 21, 1780.

AT a large and respectable meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Surry, the following Petition to Parliament was unanimously agreed to.

To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Surrey,

Sheweth,

That your petitioners, in common with others, the proprietors of lands, and inhabitants of this kingdom in general, labour under the pressure of new and burdensome taxes, year after year, imposed for the purpose of discharging the growing interest of an already enormous, but still accumulating national debt.

That this nation hath been engaged for several years in a most expensive and unfortunate war; that many of our valuable colonies having actually declared themselves independent, have formed a strict confederacy with France and Spain, the inveterate enemies of Great Britain; that the consequences of these combined misfortunes hath been a large addition to the national debt, a heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land rents of the kingdom; and that your petitioners are justly alarmed at the diminution of the resources of this country at a time when they feel their burthens daily and grievously increasing.

That they humbly conceive that of the enormous sums levied for the pretended necessities of Government, a much smaller proportion would answer all the purposes of its real exigencies; and that, these extraordinary demands upon them are applied to (which they humbly submit therefore as the immediate and visible cause of their present grievances) the support of divers persons, whose emoluments of office are enormous, of divers others possessed of superfluous and unnecessary places, of a numerous list of undeserved pensions, and of many hitherto unexplained and unauthorized services, from which, at the same time that an enormous and unconstitutional influence is derived to the crown, your petitioners conceive that no adequate benefit accrues to the public, and to the further maintenance and support of which, under the present diminution of the rents of land-owners, and the otherwise impoverished condition of them, and of the inhabitants of the kingdom in general, they find themselves no longer equal.

Your petitioners therefore, sinking as they thus are, under burdens every day increasing, and the alarming consideration of their once ample resources, continually diminished, do humbly appeal to and implore the justice of this honourable House, earnestly intreating them to interpose their authority on so momentous an occasion, (before any farther burdens are laid upon this country) by enquiring into and correcting the many flagrant abuses in the expenditure of public money, by a timely reduction of the exorbitant emoluments of many efficient offices of the State; by a total abolition of all unnecessary places and unmerited pensions, and by applying the produce thereof to the exigencies of the State alone, in such a manner as to the wisdom of Parliament shall seem best calculated

calculated for the purposes of its future support, and for effectually restoring its ancient dignity and vigour.

After which the following Resolution was also unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That a committee of fifty-six gentlemen be appointed to carry on the necessary correspondence for effectually promoting the objects of the petition, and to prepare a PLAN OF AN ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support that laudable purpose, and such other measures as may conduce TO RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT.

[The Petitions and Resolutions from Bedford, Essex, and Somerset, are the same as those from York.]

NOTTINGHAM, Jan. 21, 1780.

IN consequence of a letter addressed to the worshipful the Mayor, and signed by a great majority of the Hall, the Mayor and Burgesses of this town were this day assembled in Common Council, and resolved on the following Petition to the honorable the House of Commons.

To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Mayor and Burgesses of the town and county of Nottingham, in common-council assembled.

At the height of national calamity; we, the Mayor and Burgesses of the town and county of the town of Nottingham, in common-hall assembled, approach a British House of Commons with that respect which is due to the appointed guardians of our rights, and with that hope which it becomes us to entertain from those who are honoured with so great a trust. The growing and almost insupportable distresses of this injured and degraded country summon us into your presence, that you may know our sense of these distresses, of their cause and of their remedy: and find in the wishes of the people the best encouragement to an immediate and effectual interposition for their rescue.

Whether by crime, or by misfortune, or both, one great member of the British empire be gone; yet with such a diminution of wealth and power, to be engaged in the most complicated and formidable war, surely asks for the most rigid economy in every department of the state. But with grief and shame we observe, that a wasteful prodigality has dissipated our remaining strength, and by enfeebling our efforts, disgraced our arms, and multiplied our losses; while this very prodigality becomes the source of increased demands, aggravates the burdens under which every rank and description of the people bow, and threatens in its progress a general ruin.

We look up to your honorable House for a period to this dreadful progress, and that with the integrity and firmness of the Commons of Britain, you will make a severe enquiry into the expenditure of that immense treasure, which a liberality unknown in the most flourishing period has drawn from an almost exhausted nation. The magnanimity

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of a free people can give the last shilling in the cause of their country, but in no other cause; and this confidence, which shall dispose of them to the last exertions, can only be derived from your inquiry into those abuses, which may render such exertions necessary; they expect to know, that successive grants shall not find them less prepared to meet an elated foe, and facilitate the most awful of all calamities, *the ruin of their liberties.*

In this reduced and humble state of the nation, it is a farther pain to observe, the enormous sums which are diverted to no public good; the exorbitant emoluments annexed to real, and much more to nominal offices, with indiscriminate, unmerited pensions; which devour the public treasure, defeat the national efforts, degrade the spirit of Englishmen into sordid avarice, subvert the independence of Parliament, and act with a malignant influence on all that is dear to our country.

Under the impression of these awful truths, we beg leave to represent, that the redress of these ruinous abuses is the right of Britons, and the only source from which hope can again be brought back to their country; and that till some wise and vigorous measures for the effecting this purpose be adopted, no addition can with wisdom, honor, or safety, be made to the pecuniary burdens of these kingdoms. We would respectfully observe, that such a conduct in times of danger, distress, and apprehension, has been the distinguishing character of your honorable House, that by which the very being of your House, and the being of our Constitution, has been preserved; and that in no period has distress and apprehension more summoned the Representatives of Britain to the exertion of their proper character, to the fulfilling every hope of their anxious constituents. With these abuses in all their magnitude, in all their operation, before you, every grant beyond the produce of the present taxes, will be to wanton with the rights and property of the people, and betray the faith and dignity of Parliament.

It is our prayer, therefore, to this honorable House, that all extravagant emoluments be reduced, all superfluous and nominal offices be abolished, and all unmerited pensions be resumed, and that the produce be appropriated to the necessities of the state. And that till this wise and necessary reform be adopted, and till effectual means be applied to enquire into and correct the abuses in the expenditure of the public money, whereby the fears and jealousies of the people may be appeased, and a well-grounded confidence diffused through the community, you will, with that justice and patriotism which we promise ourselves from your honorable House, withhold all grants of the public money, beyond the produce of the present taxes.

Trusting that this our just and interesting Petition will meet with all favorable reception,

We ever pray, &c.

[The Petition and Resolutions of the county of Wilts are the same as those of York.]

CLOU.

GLOUCESTER, Jan. 25, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Gloucester, a Petition similar to that of York was read and agreed to. After which the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the Committee be requested to consider of and prepare a PLAN OF AN ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support the *laudable Reform* therein recommended, and for RESTORING THE INDEPENDENCY OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That the said Committee be desired to CORRESPOND and CO-OPERATE with the Committees of other Counties and Public Bodies for this purpose.

[The Petition and Resolutions of the Counties of Huntingdon, Dorset, and Cumberland, are the same as those of York.]

NORTHAMPTON, Jan. 3, 1780.

ON Saturday last a meeting of the Noblemen, Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Northampton, was held, when it was unanimously agreed to give the following instructions to their Representatives.

Instructions of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Northampton, to their Representatives in Parliament, LUCY KNIGHTLY and THOMAS POWYS, Esqrs.

Setting forth,

“That this nation hath been, and is still, engaged in a most expensive war, which has unavoidably caused a great increase of taxes, the burden of which makes the strictest frugality in every department of the state absolutely necessary; and that we, therefore, think it necessary to instruct our Members to represent to the honorable House of Commons, how necessary it is to use the utmost exertion of œconomy to alleviate the burden, by timely exerting those powers with which this honorable House is invested.

“And we recommend that some plan should be adopted for abolishing *sinécure places*, preventing in future the granting *unmerited pensions*, reducing *exorbitant salaries*, and annexing settled stipends to offices in lieu of perquisites of office; taking into consideration what saving may be made, consistent with public dignity and justice, appropriating the same to the necessities of the state, in such manner as to the wisdom of Parliament shall seem meet; which will, we conceive, be productive of such relief to the country, as will enable it to support the burden laid on it.

“And being made sensible that a studious attention is had to œconomy in the expenditure of public money, we shall, with confidence and zeal, contribute to revenge the unjust and formidable attacks of our enemies, and not despair of seeing this again a formidable and happy nation.”

NORWICH, Jan. 29, 1780.

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of the county of Norwich, the following Petition was unanimously agreed to.

To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Gentlemen, Freeholders, Land-owners, and other Inhabitants paying Taxes in the County of Norfolk,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, alarmed at the still growing burdens of this country, notwithstanding the annual diminution of its supplies, feeling that the strictest œconomy must be adopted in every rank of private life, must have lost every power of reflection not to discern, that the most rigid frugality is absolutely necessary in every department of the state.

To this honorable House, then, your Petitioners look up for succour and protection:—to you they apply as more peculiarly entrusted with the controul of the national purse; and with all that solicitude which the pressure of private distress, and the dread of public ruin can excite, earnestly request that this House would be pleased to make no grant of public money without the most palpable evidence of its necessity, and that they would be pleased further to provide, by all the means with which the Constitution furnishes, and with all that vigor and resolution with which zeal for that Constitution can inspire them, that none of the public money, when granted, be improperly applied, or improvidently squandered.

Thus roused by effects to the investigation of their causes, suffer your Petitioners still further to represent, that the time is now arrived, when it is become absolutely requisite, that all *sinécure places and pensions*, unmerited by public service, should be abolished; and that the exorbitant emoluments, even of efficient places, should be reduced; and that such expenditures may no longer continue to increase the calamitous and impoverished condition of the nation, and to add a **GREAT AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE TO THE CROWN**;—an *accession of influence*, which the best informed in the laws, the sincerest friends of Government, and the most loyal and faithful subjects to the king, have, in the hour of calm reflection, unwarpd by interest, unbiassed by party, not only deplored as *inimical to the liberties of this country*, but as *tending to effect*, what it soon may, **THE ENTIRE SUBVERSION OF THE WHOLE FABRIC OF THE CONSTITUTION**.

Your Petitioners, therefore, appealing to the justice of this honorable House, and confiding in your fidelity to the principles of your delegated trust, do not only most earnestly request, that effectual measures may be taken towards redressing the oppressive grievances herein stated before any new burdens be laid upon this afflicted country, but beg leave likewise to represent, that unless such measures be so taken, the grant of any public money, beyond the produce of the present taxes, will be injurious to the rights and property of the people, and consequently derogatory from the honor and dignity of Parliament.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

DEVON.

AT a very respectable meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Devon, the following Petition was agreed to.

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders, of the County of Devon,

Sheweth,

That your petitioners cannot view the declining situation of the British empire, without calling on this honorable House, by every tie of interest, honor, and justice, to avert the ruin that menaces this once great and prosperous nation, by a proper and timely exertion of those powers, which, by the Constitution, this honorable House is invested with.

Alarmed at the diminished resources and growing burthens of this country, and viewing with the greatest concern a large addition to the national debt, an heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land rents, of this kingdom, we are convinced that the most strict and exemplary frugality is now indispensibly necessary, in every department of state, in order to enable his Majesty to prosecute the war with the greater vigour.

Your petitioners observe with grief, that notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished condition of the nation, much public money has been improvidently squandered, and that many individuals enjoy sinecure places, efficient places, with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service, to a large and still increasing amount, whence the crown has acquired an extensive and unconstitutional influence, which, if not restrained, may soon prove fatal to the liberties of this country.

Your petitioners therefore, appealing to the justice of this honorable House, do most earnestly request that effectual measures may be taken by this House to enquire into and correct the gross abuses in the raising and expenditure of public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments; to rescind and abolish all sinecure places and unmerited pensions; and to appropriate the produce to the necessities of the state, in such manner as to the wisdom of Parliament shall seem meet.

And your petitioners shall ever pray.

After which the following Resolution was proposed and agreed to.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to carry on the necessary correspondence for effectually promoting the object of the petition, and such other measures as may conduce TO RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT, and promote œconomy in the raising and expenditure of the public money; and that they do meet and adjourn when they shall see occasion for so doing.

[The Petition and Resolutions for the County of Berks is the same as that from York.]

WESTMINSTER-HALL, Feb. 2, 1780.

AT a very large and most respectable meeting of the electors and inhabitants of this city and liberty, paying taxes to government, held here this day, the Hon. Charles James Fox was unanimously voted in the chair; after which, it was unanimously resolved that a petition, similar to that from the county of York, be presented to the House of Commons. It was likewise further resolved, *nemine contradicente*, that this meeting do approve of a NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to promote a reform in the expenditure of public money, to reduce all exorbitant emoluments, to rescind and abolish all sinecure places and unmerited pensions, and to RESTORE AND SECURE TO THE PEOPLE THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT, AS INDISPENSIBLY NECESSARY TO THE WELFARE OF THE STATE.

Resolved, *nem. con.* That a Committee of one hundred and three be appointed, to carry on the NECESSARY CORRESPONDENCE, for EFFECTUALLY PROMOTING the object of the Petition, and to prepare the plan of an ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support the LAUDABLE REFORM, and such other measures as may conduce to restore the freedom of Parliament.

Resolved, that the DUKE of PORTLAND, LORD TEMPLE, LORD EGREMONT, LORD CHOLMONDELY, LORD DERBY, LORD CRAVEN, LORD GEORGE CAVENDISH, LORD KING, and Mr. BURKE, be of the committee.

READING, February 3, 1780.

AT a very respectable meeting of the electors of this borough, held this day in the Town-Hall, the following petition and resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the Electors of the borough of Reading,

Sheweth,

That your petitioners, considering the vast sums of money that have been expended in the present unfortunate war, sensibly affected themselves by the heavy taxes already laid upon the subjects of this kingdom, and alarmed at the idea that others may be shortly imposed, humbly request your honourable House to turn their most serious attention to the diminished resources and growing burdens of this country.

Your petitioners conceive that in this time of general distress, it will be necessary to alleviate the public burdens, by abolishing sinecure and useless places, curtailing the exorbitant salaries and perquisites annexed to others, and resuming many unmerited pensions, the disposal of which, not only occasions a great waste of public treasure, but gives an unconstitutional power to the ministers of the Crown, subverts the independence of Parliament, and operates with an undue influence on all that is dear to our country.

Your Petitioners humbly conceive that the interposition of your honorable House in these points, and its diligent attention to a just and economical

oeconomical expenditure of the public revenue, by persons intrusted with it, may be productive of great national good, and enable this country, by properly directing and combining its resources, to prevail over its most powerful enemies.

They therefore presume thus to address their Petition to your honorable House, assuring them, that it does not in any wise originate from a spirit of party, but is dictated by the clearest conviction that the present situation of affairs requires the attention of every man, and his honest and speedy exertion of all possible means to promote and defend the public weal.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

[The Petition of Newcastle upon Tyne is the same as that of York.]

LONDON, Feb. 10, 1780.

AT a Common-Council held for the said City, the following Resolutions passed unanimously.

1. Resolved, That this Court doth now agree to petition the honorable House of Commons on the expenditure of public money, and the increasing influence of the Crown.

2. Resolved, That the Committee this day appointed to prepare the above Petition be empowered and directed to CORRESPOND with the Committees appointed, or to be appointed, by the several counties, cities, and boroughs, in this kingdom, for the purposes mentioned in the said Petition.

3. Resolved, That it be an instruction to the said Committee to meet such members of the Committees of the several petitioning counties, cities, and boroughs, as are now in London, or who may be deputed for the purpose of presenting or supporting their Petitions, and who may think it necessary to confer on the means of promoting the common object of the said Petition.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Feb. 26, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Yeomanry, Freeholders, and Tradesmen of the county of Bucks, a Petition similar to that of York was read and agreed to, and the following resolutions unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the petition now read, is approved of by this meeting, and that the Members for the county be desired to present and support the same.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to carry on the NECESSARY CORRESPONDENCE, and to prepare A PLAN OF ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, for the support of that *laudable Reform*, together with such other measures as may conduce to RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved,

Resolved, That the Committee consist of the following Noblemen and Gentlemen.

Duke of Grafton, DUKE OF PORTLAND, Earl of Surry, Earl of Jersey, Earl Stanhope, Earl Temple, Earl Spencer, EDMUND BURKE, Esq. and others.

Resolved, That a meeting of twelve members be empowered to act, and that their acts be considered as the acts of the Committee, and that the Committee have power to add to their number.

NOTTINGHAM, Feb. 28, 1780.

AT a meeting of the county of Nottingham, the following Resolutions passed with but *one* dissenting voice.

1. Resolved, That the Petition now read to this meeting, addressed to the House of Commons, and requesting that effectual measures may be taken by that House, to enquire into and correct the gross abuses in the expenditure of public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments of office; to rescind or abolish all sinecure places and unmerited pensions, is approved by this meeting.

2. Resolved, That a Committee be appointed for carrying into effect, as far as may be, all the Resolutions of this meeting, and that such Committee shall consist of twenty-three Gentlemen, among whom are the following.

DUKE OF PORTLAND, Lord Edward Bentinck, Lord George Sutton, and Mr. George Sutton.

3. Resolved, That the said Committee be instructed to CORRESPOND with the Committees of other counties, cities, and towns, in order to obtain, in a legal and constitutional manner, the object of the Petition.

4. Resolved, That the members of this county be desired to present this Petition; and that the Committee be desired to write to the members of Parliament respecting the boroughs in this county, to desire their support in Parliament to this Petition.

5. Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to those noblemen and gentlemen who, in both Houses of Parliament, have strenuously opposed *the increase of the public burthen*, and uniformly endeavored to support *the independence of the Representatives of the People*, by correcting those abuses of government, *unsettled accounts and unmerited pensions*.

6. Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to the DUKE OF PORTLAND for his attendance here this day.

7. Resolved that the said Committee be desired to use their efforts for promoting the object of the Petition, by a due attention to the proper means of counteracting all such attempts as may be made to misrepresent the proceedings of this meeting, or to deceive or impose upon the inhabitants of the county, by artful hand-bills, or any other means; so that the inhabitants may be enabled to judge who are their friends, and who are not.

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CAMBRIDGE, March 9, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Corporation of this Town, the following Petition was unanimously agreed to.

To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgeſſes of the Town of Cambridge, in Common-Hall aſſembled,

Sheweth,

That this nation has been engaged for ſeveral years in an expensive and moſt unfortunate war; the conſequence of which hath been a conſiderable addition to the national debt, a decline of trade, a rapid and alarming decreaſe in value of the landed property of this kingdom, and an accumulation of taxes, by which your Petitioners find themſelves much oppreſſed.

That the reduction of the public expence has, by all orders of the community, been long thought a proper expedient, and your Petitioners are now convinced it is a neceſſary one; and that a reformation in the public expenditure, and an æconomical management of the revenue of the ſtate, will greatly promote real content among his majeſty's ſubjects, and inſpire them with that unanimity ſo neceſſary to a vigorous exertion of the force of this empire againſt its combined enemies, France and Spain, and to the reſtoring its late flouriſhing ſtate.

Your Petitioners, therefore, appealing to this honorable Houſe, and conſidering the members thereof as their conſtitutional guardians, do moſt earneſtly requeſt they will take, and urge with perſeverance, the moſt effectual means to correct all abuſes in the expenditure of public money; to reduce all exorbitant emoluments of office; to reſcind or aboliſh all ſinecure places and unmerited penſions, which tend to give an unconſtitutional influence to the Miniſters of the Crown, and burden the ſubject beyond what the abſolute neceſſities of the ſtate require.

And your Petitioners ſhall ever pray, &c.

[*The Petition of the County of Suffolk is the ſame as that of York.*]

MORPETH, March 8, 1780.

AT a very numerous and reſpectable meeting of Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of the county of Northumberland, the following Petition was propoſed and agreed to.

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament aſſembled.

The Petition of the Noblemen, Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and Landholders of the County of Northumberland,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners conſidering the vaſt ſums of money which have been expended, as well as the great increaſe of the national debt, occaſioned by the preſent moſt unfortunate war, and being ſenſibly affected

feſted by the heavy load of taxes already laid on the ſubjects of this kingdom, and apprehenſive that others muſt ſoon be impoſed, humbly requeſt this Honourable Houſe, ſeriouſly to turn their attention to the diminiſhed reſources and growing burthens of this country.

Your petitioners conceive that in this time of national diſtreſs, it will be neceſſary, as much as poſſible, to alleviate the public burthens, by abolifhing ſinecure and uſeleſs places, and reducing the exorbitant ſalaries and perquiſites annexed to others, the diſpoſal of which not only occasions a great waſte of public treaſure, but gives an unconfitutional power to the Miniſters of the Crown.

Your petitioners humbly conceive that the interpoſition of this Honourable Houſe in theſe points, and a diligent ANNUAL examination into the expenditure of the public money, muſt be productive of great national good, and enable this country, by properly directing and combining its reſources, to prevail over its moſt powerful enemies.

They eſteem it their duty, therefore, to addreſs this Honourable Houſe, hoping that the reaſonable requeſt of this petition will be taken into their moſt ſerious conſideration.

And your Petitioners ſhall ever pray, &c.

After which the following reſolution was unaniouſly agreed to :

Reſolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to his Grace the DUKE OF PORTLAND, and the Earl of Tankerville, for honoring the meeting with their preſence, and ſupporting the petition.

[*The Petition of the County of Hereford is ſimilar to that of York.*]

MIDDLESEX COMMITTEE. *Free-Maſon's Tavern, March 21.*

Whereas there hath been this day tranſmitted to this Committee, from the general meeting of deputies, appointed by the ſeveral petitioning counties, cities and towns, a copy of their reſolves, containing propoſitions for a GENERAL PLAN OF ASSOCIATION, and alſo a Memorial, juſtifying the ſaid propoſitions, with a Circular Letter from the Chairman of the ſaid meeting :

Reſolved unaniouſly, That this Committee are of opinion that the ſaid reſolves, and the circular letter annexed thereto, are formed upon the beſt policy for bringing all the ſaid petitioning counties, cities, and towns, and others which have not yet petitioned Parliament for a redreſs of national grievances, into that well-compacted union, which cannot fail of giving ſucceſs in the end to the prayers of the people, by repairing the injuries which this conſtitution hath ſuffered, and by eradicating from it that dangerous influence of the CROWN, WHICH HATH NEARLY SAPPED ITS FOUNDATION.

Reſolved unaniouſly, That this Committee do adjourn the conſideration of the particular propoſitions, tranſmitted by the ſaid meeting of Deputies, to Tueſday the 4th day of April.

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And whereas it is requested by the said meeting of Deputies, that this, as well as every other Committee, would take the most effectual means for circulating their said Memorial through the kingdom, by which they trust all men will be impressed with the propriety of those measures which they have proposed.

Resolved unanimously, That this Committee do publish (together with the resolves of this meeting) the said Memorial, with the whole of the resolutions and circular letter so transmitted to them.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Committee be given to James Townsend, Esq. George Prescott, Esq. and the Rev. Robert Bromley, the Deputies from this Committee to the general meeting of Deputies, for their faithful execution of the important trust reposed in them, and their temperate and judicious conduct in support of the opinions of the Committee.

JAMES TOWNSEND, Chairman.

AT a meeting of Deputies from the counties of York, Surrey, Middlesex, Sussex, Gloucester, Hertford, Kent, Huntingdon, Dorset, Bucks, Chester, Devon, and Essex, from the cities of London, Westminster, and Gloucester, and the towns of Newcastle and Nottingham, holden at the St. Alban's Tavern, and afterwards by several adjournments at the Great Room in King-street, St. James's, on Saturday the 11th, Tuesday the 14th, Wednesday the 15th, Friday the 17th, Saturday the 18th, and Monday the 20th days of March, 1780,

The Reverend Christopher Wyvill, one of the Deputies from the county of York, in the Chair,

Resolved, That the Deputies from the Committees of the different petitioning counties, cities, and towns, shall vote by deputations, each deputation giving one vote.

Read and approved the following MEMORIAL, containing REASONS FOR A PLAN OF ASSOCIATION, proposed by the Deputies from the several counties, cities, and towns, who have petitioned Parliament for a redress of grievances.

If there ever was a period in the annals of this country for popular jealousy to be awake, and popular virtue to exert itself, it is the present. Other æras have been marked by partial inroads on the Constitution, grasping at particular prerogatives, and narrowing chiefly the subordinate branches of civil liberty. But whatever was their measure, disappointment and overthrow have generally been their fate. That public virtue, which hath distinguished Englishmen, never forsook our ancestors in the hour of important trial, never left the arbitrary mind to triumph finally in success. Their Representatives in the legislative body might be depended on at the national call, and in that barrier they ever found themselves impregnable.

What is our situation at present? By the operation of a despotic system, which has continued, with very little intermission, near nineteen years, and is now almost completed by a dangerous Administration, the very vitals of the Constitution have received a mortal wound: not this or that partiality of the reigning mind has been gratified, but the whole capacity of popular freedom has been struck at: we are arrived at the crisis, which the wisest of political writers have uniformly marked for

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the downfall of Britain, * *when the legislative body shall become as corrupt as the executive, and dependent upon it.*

Let any man look back to the laws which have passed only in the ten last Sessions of Parliament, forming, as it were, step by step, a *Code of Prerogative*, which has already brought within its vortex the primary parts of civil, religious, commercial and military Administration, within the kingdom, or its dependencies, not excepting from its vast controul all the branches of the Royal Family, and but too probably the succession of the Crown: let him look back to these, and then doubt if the executive power has not found its way to the corruption of the legislative. Let him behold a venal majority in the House of Commons, Session after Session, moving obsequious to the nod of the Minister, and giving the legislative sanction to propositions, not only big with the fate of their country, but often militating against the first principles of the Constitution, and the declared voice of their constituents; while every effort of reason and argument, urged by an independent few, has only been answered by NUMBERS, dumb to every other reply: and then let him judge how enormous that corruption must be. But let him bring his observation to the immense patronage of the Crown, diffused over this legislative body in the bestowal of offices, and where offices are too few, or not lucrative enough to satiate the corruption of individuals, in ruinous contracts, in profuse pensions, some known, and others studiously concealed: let these be considered, and the terms above-mentioned, in which the crisis of British freedom is marked, are indisputably fulfilled, *the legislative body is as corrupt as the executive, and dependent upon it.*

For us then it is reserved to feel ourselves bowed down under that intolerable oppression, which to a British mind, in any past generation, could appear but as a fearful speculation—**THE ENORMOUS, THE COMPACTLY ACCUMULATED, THE ALL-DEVOURING INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN.** By an unhappy war with America, begotten in the first insolence of this despotic system, and nursed with a view of giving completion to it, this fatal influence has been armed with more ample means than ever it enjoyed before, for enslaving Parliament, in the private application of no small part of those monies, which have far exceeded the supplies of former wars, and have been obtained under the pretext of necessary public service: while the nation itself, in every species of its property, in every department of its commerce, in every description of its people (those only excepted who have become great on the spoils of the public) hath visibly sunk almost into beggary. Never, surely, did any country experience so sudden a reverse from prosperity to depression. It took place, it covered us, while we began but to forebode it. The weight of its evils now rests on our heads in the alarming fall of rents, the decay of manufactures, the accumulation of taxes, the stagnation of all credit: at the same time there is but the probability of worse ensuing after bad—the humble and temperate petitions of an oppressed people are answered if not with insolence, yet hitherto with unfeeling neglect—the oppressors of the land are still cherished, nay, rewards and honours keep pace with the accumulation of their misconduct—Men of integrity, on whom the public confidence would rest, are cast out—and amidst all these, we have the mortifying reflection to find, that an Administration, thus

hostile to the people, though possessing ostensibly the responsibility of office, is entrenched, or labours to entrench itself behind the Royal Person, covered with prerogatives, which would exempt HIM from doing wrong.

These are evils which must be redressed, if we would not be stigmatized for slaves, to the latest generations. It is the definition of an Englishman to be *jealous* of the influence of the Crown; it is the definition of a Member of the British Parliament to *check* it. Shall both forfeit for ever, nay, cover in shame, the lustre of their proper character? The reproach hath been cast on us all, but too long, and chiefly by those who have dealt out the arts of corruption, that it is to our own want of public virtue, in the choice of our Representatives, we are indebted for any invasions our liberties sustain. It is time, therefore, that virtue should shew itself. And, however it may blast the thriving hopes of power, yet Princes ought to be overjoyed to have subjects to whom honor is dearer than every thing else.

'Tis from necessity, therefore, founded in such reasons as neither their honor nor their understanding can overlook, that the numerous petitioning counties, cities and towns of England, have taken the alarm, and have stepped forth by applications to Parliament, and by such CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATIONS as may give vigour, to their Petitions. And we hope, while the cause continues, that the alarm will never cease, but that all will see their interest and their danger undisguised, and come forward, till there be but one voice throughout the land.

We are persuaded, under circumstances so pressing as the present, that nothing can give effectual redress to all the evils we feel, but a reformation of the FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCY OF PARLIAMENT, by a REFORM in all those circumstances, which are at present the avenues and establishments of a corrupted influence. And nothing can put us in a full possession of that desirable and most necessary event, but a vigorous, compacted, and unshaken union of all independent men throughout the kingdom.

Wherefore, we do most anxiously recommend it to all classes of citizens, and especially to those who have votes for the returning of any Members to Parliament, as they value their liberties, the preservation of their remaining properties, and the rescuing of their posterity from unconstitutional dominion, to unite themselves in a firm purpose of obtaining, from their Representatives, those salutary REFORMS (the outlines of which are hereafter submitted) by the establishment whereof, the door must be effectually shut on corruption; and jointly and severally to persevere, regardless of every consideration to the contrary, until they shall have obtained the same.

In the first place then, it must be evident, that a reformation is indispensibly necessary in the Civil Establishment, which has grown to such a fund of corruption, in an infinity of offices, either useless in their nature, or greatly overpaid in their exercise—in the means it affords for a shameful expenditure in pensions unmerited by services—in the waste committed in the receipt of its monies, and the making up of its accounts. 'Tis impossible, humanly speaking, that while these temptations exist, any Assembly, on whom they are pressed, should be completely free.

In the next place, experience hath ever agreed with the best speculation, that independency in the British House of Commons is most to be looked for in the Representatives of counties. Taking things as they stand at present, there is not the probability of a balance against the influence which now corrupts, without an augmentation of Knights of Shires, attentively chosen. And taking things as we hope to find them shortly, when many branches of corruption may be lopped off, such augmentation will give the greatest security to the national interest, in the best quarter. Less than one hundred Knights, superadded to the present, will hardly give a number to be felt by every county, nor a number sufficient to secure, at present, a balance to the independent side. And if the number were left indefinite now, every salutary hope from this measure might be defeated. If ever the hour shall come, when the prudence of the people, uniting with the prepared minds of the Legislature, shall approve of a reduction in the representation of boroughs, on such plans as shall silence the prejudices of the interested, the augmentation now proposed will no longer be found in the numbers of the House; and, till that takes place, necessity, and the only opening of hope, should reconcile the addition, if our first choice might not embrace it.

To these regulations we conceive, an addition must be made, for **SHORTENING THE DURATION OF THE SITTING OF PARLIAMENT**, which can only be done consistently with the Constitution, or with the best policy in any enlarged view, by **SHORTENING IT TO THE PERIOD OF A YEAR**. When the two Acts, which passed in the reign of *Edward III.* ordained that *a Parliament should be holden once every year, and more often if need be*; the object then evidently being to prevent the Crown from acting without a Parliament, can it be conceived that they did not speak what the Constitution demanded, or that they did not mean a *new* Parliament every year? The fact is, during the whole of that reign, and for the first eighteen years of the following one, writs were annually issued, and in some instances, two or three times in the same year, for new elections, till *Richard II.* made himself absolute. And various were the occasions in those times, when the Commons gave for answer to any new propositions of magnitude, that *they dared not agree without conference with their counties*. At what period then was it, that the consent of the people was asked and obtained to so momentous a proposal, as that of divesting them of their expected controul over their representatives: in fact, of changing the terms, on which the delegation had passed from their hands? **ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS** are, therefore, the **ANCIENT CONSTITUTION OF ENGLAND, AND THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ENGLISHMEN**.

Nor are they less beneficial in policy than unalienable in right. In the language of ancient times, before the prejudices of habit had thrown false colours over names and things, they were ever described as consistent with the greatest peace, and most peaceably conducted. And in Parliamentary Records for more than two hundred years together, from 49 *Hen. III.* till 22 *Edw. IV.* we find not so much as *one* double return, nor more than two or three instances of elections questioned on any ground—a circumstance surely most inviting, when put in contrast with that multitude of perplexing inquiries, which of late years hath consumed so much time in Committees, to the great hindrance of the national business. The plain reason is founded not in the time,

time, but in the nature of the thing; the duration of the seat was not an object for a violent contest. This will also dispel the objection arising from the probability of tumult and expensiveness; to remove which, it will further contribute not a little, if we would give attention to what passes now among those large bodies of electors who annually choose their corporate officers. But the argument against corruption surmounts every thing else. Nothing can give so much assurance of defeating it as this limitation. A seat for three years might induce a man's attention to a bribe. He that sits but for one is very unlikely to experience such an offer; or will certainly reject it, if he would not wish to put all his future expectations to an imminent risk.

When once the Constitution of Parliament is improved in these leading points, every thing else that may appear to have its share in *Reformation*, must be subordinate in its class, and must follow in its time. And the more effectually to ensure these, we intreat you, neither at the next, or any future election, to engage your support to any candidate, before you are satisfied that he will give his assistance in Parliament to the establishment of so much of these *reforms* as may not then be accomplished.

Resolved, That this meeting do recommend to the several Committees to persevere unremittingly in support of the Petitions, and of such measures as tend to *reduce the unconstitutional influence of the Crown*; and for that purpose to unite themselves in a GENERAL ASSOCIATION.

Resolved; That obtaining a law for taking the suffrages of the People in such a mode, as to prevent both expence in elections, and the operation of undue influence therein, is necessary towards securing the FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That it be recommended to our several Committees to adopt the following propositions, as parts of their GENERAL PLAN OF UNION AND ASSOCIATION, and to endeavor to obtain the objects of such propositions by application to, and under the authority of, Parliament, viz.

Resolved—1st, That a diligent examination be made into all the branches of the receipt, expenditure, and mode of keeping and passing accounts of public money, in order to obtain the PLAN of REFORM, requested by the Petitions of the People.

Resolved—2d, That there be sent to the House of Commons, in addition to the present Representatives of counties, a number of members, not less than one hundred, to be chosen, in a due proportion, by the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain.

Resolved—3d, THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BE ANNUALLY ELECTED TO SERVE IN PARLIAMENT.

Resolved—4th, That it be most earnestly recommended to the Freeholders of the different counties, and to the electors of the cities and boroughs throughout the kingdom, to support at the ensuing general election, such candidates to represent them in Parliament as shall, previous to the election, by signing the ASSOCIATION, or otherwise, have satisfied them, that they will support the above important regulations in Par-

Parliament, or so much thereof as shall not be obtained in the present Parliament.

Resolved, That the propriety of adopting the following Resolution, as greatly tending to accelerate the attainment of the objects of the proposed plan of POLITICAL REFORMATION, be submitted to the respective Committees, viz.

That it be most earnestly recommended to all members of Parliament, who are friends to the above-mentioned proposed PLAN OF REFORM, to use their utmost endeavors, in this present session of Parliament, to obtain the objects of that plan.

Resolved, That the above Memorial, formed in this Meeting, be transmitted to the several Committees, as containing REASONS for the PLAN OF ASSOCIATION proposed by this Meeting, which, we trust, will appear satisfactory to those Committees, and that they be severally requested to take such effectual measures as to them may seem meet, FOR MAKING THE SAME PUBLIC THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM.

(Signed) by order of this } C. WYVILL, Chairman.
Meeting of Deputies,

Circular Letter, ordered to be annexed to the Resolutions, &c. of the Meeting of Deputies.

Great Room, King-street, March 20, 1780.

SIR,

I am directed by the Meeting of Deputies from the Committees of several counties, cities, and towns, which have petitioned Parliament for a redress of grievances, adjourned from the St. Alban's Tavern to this place, to transmit to you the enclosed copy of their Resolutions, relative to an intended Plan of GENERAL UNION AND ASSOCIATION, accompanied with a copy of a Memorial containing reasons in justification of those resolutions, to be reported to the Committee of the county of Middlesex at its next assembly.

The Deputies trust their resolutions will be considered, not as offering to the Committee a complete and perfect System of POLITICAL REFORMATION, but as pointing out some principal objects of constitutional improvement, which, if obtained by the united efforts of the People, will facilitate and secure the establishment of every other regulation which may be necessary to RESTORE THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

From various circumstances, the Deputies apprehend, it may be found to be inexpedient in some counties to adopt a Plan of ASSOCIATION so extensive as that traced out by their resolutions; in that case, as it is the general and received opinion, that shortening the duration of Parliament will be improper till the economical reform, and a more equal Representation of the People have been obtained; the Deputies conceive, that the proposition for SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT may be postponed with less inconvenience in the original draught of ASSOCIATION, than any other proposition recommended by this Meeting.

I am

I am also directed by the Meeting of Deputies, to represent, through you, to the Committee, that there is much reason to apprehend Parliament may be dissolved soon after the grant of supplies has received the royal assent; that it behoves each Committee, therefore, to prepare for that event, by concerting measures effectually to support the interest of those candidates, at the approaching general election, who are known to APPROVE AN ECONOMICAL REFORMATION, A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE, AND SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT.

I beg leave further to represent, under the same authority, that the several Committees, discountenancing all *corrupt* and *unnecessary* expences at any future elections, will thereby promote in a considerable degree the FREEDOM OF ELECTION, which must immediately tend to secure the independence of Parliament.

I have the honor to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

[The committee of the city of London agreed to the above Memorial, and came to the same resolutions as the Middlesex committee.]

CAMBRIDGE, March 25, 1780.

AT a large and respectable meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Cambridge, the following Petition to Parliament was unanimously agreed to.

To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Cambridge,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners do thus publicly declare their entire and zealous approbation of the Legislature of this country, as placed in the free and independent concurrence of King, Lords, and Commons, in preference to every other mode of civil government.

That they anxiously wish the blessings of this form of legislation to be continued to their latest posterity in its constitutional purity.

That they seriously apprehend this form of legislation will be essentially vitiated, if not VIRTUALLY CHANGED, whenever the treasure and offices of the community shall be successfully employed to bring the Representatives of the People under the influence of the executive power.

That they conceive a strong tendency to this change is at present, and has formerly been, too notorious to admit of doubt, or to require proof.

That they consider every system of public administration, carried on by means of *parliamentary corruption*, however sanctified by time, precedent, or authority, to be absolutely unjustifiable on every principle of good

good sense and sound polity—to be as dishonorable to the upright intentions of the Crown, as it is burdensome to the property, and dangerous to the liberties of the People.

Your Petitioners do, therefore, most solemnly apply themselves to the honor, the justice, the integrity, of this honorable House, praying that effectual measures may be taken by this House, to enquire into and correct any gross abuses in the expenditure of public money, to reduce all *exorbitant emoluments of office*, to rescind and abolish all *sinécure places* and *unmerited pensions*, and to use all such other constitutional means, as may tend to establish the INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT on the most lasting foundations.

And your Petitioners are the more earnest in this their prayer, because they are of opinion, that no other expedient can equally tend to heal our domestic divisions, to unite the whole nation in the warmest support of his majesty's person and government, against the unprovoked hostilities of the house of Bourbon, and to put a final period to that primary source of national distress, the American war.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

After which the following Resolution was also unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That a COMMITTEE of fifty-four Gentlemen be appointed to carry on the NECESSARY CORRESPONDENCE for effectually promoting the object of the Petition, and to prepare a plan of an ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support that *laudable Reform*, and such other measures as may conduce to RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT.

WESTMINSTER COMMITTEE.

King's-Arms Tavern, March 20, 1780.

Report of the Sub-Committee, appointed to enquire into the STATE of the REPRESENTATION of this Country.

Sub-Committee, Freemason's Tavern, March 19, 1780.

Resolved,

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that NEW PARLIAMENTS to be holden once in every year were the ancient usage, and declared to be the hereditary and indefeasible right of the People of England.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that the Act passed in the sixth year of the reign of William and Mary, is the first regular Act which attempts to establish and "appoint the time of continuance of "Parliament," to be for the term of three years, though the same Act recognizes "the ancient laws and statutes of this kingdom," by which *annual Parliaments* were confirmed, and declares "that frequent and "new Parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good agreement of the king and people."

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that by an act passed in the first year of George I. the Parliament then chosen for three years (by

the acquiescence of the People to the above-mentioned Act of William and Mary, on the faith of its declaring, that "from thenceforth no Parliament whatsoever, that shall at any time hereafter be called, assembled, or held, shall have any continuance longer than for three years only at the farthest") did pass an act to prolong its continuance to the term of seven years.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that temporary considerations, then presumed to exist in the country, are stated in the preamble to the act, as the principal motives and inducements for the act itself.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that the Act passed in the sixth of William and Mary is worded as if declaratory of what was conceived (however falsely) to have been the Constitution of the country; but that the Septennial Act assumes a power of altering the duration of Parliament at pleasure.

That these alterations in the Constitution of Parliament were made without communication with the constituent body of the People, and have been continued without the sanction of their approbation.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that the Septennial Bill was strongly opposed in Parliament, as "a direct infringement on the Constitution, and a flagrant breach of trust toward the constituent body."

That it was supported almost entirely on the principle of expediency.

That the voice of the people appeared strongly against it in many respectable Petitions to Parliament on the occasion, and that a constitutional Protest was entered by the Peers, stating, "that frequent Parliaments were the fundamental Constitution of the kingdom; that the House of Commons ought to be chosen by the People, and when continued for a longer time than they were chosen for, they were then chosen by the Parliament, and not by the People; that they conceived the Bill, so far from preventing corruption, would rather increase it; for the longer a Parliament was to last, the more valuable to corruptors would be the purchase; and that all the reasons that had been given for long Parliaments, might be given for making them perpetual, which would be an absolute subversion of the third estate."

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that various motions were afterwards made, and strongly supported, "for a repeal of the Septennial Act;" particularly, "a motion for ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS," in 1744, which was lost only by a majority of thirty-two.

That the city of London, and other respectable bodies, continued to instruct their representatives, to prosecute this object "in the most vigorous manner, as essentially necessary to the independency and integrity of Parliament, the rights of the People, and the prosperity of the country."

That with respect to the representation of the People, it appears to this Sub-Committee, that by Stat. 8 Henry VI. the Parliament, then elected by the commonalty at large, passed an act to disfranchise the greater part of their constituents, by limiting the right of election for knights of the shire, to "persons having free lands or tenements to the value of forty shillings by the year at the least;" which restriction has ever since continued.

That

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that many towns and boroughs, formerly entitled, "for their repute and population," to send members to Parliament, have since fallen into decay, yet continue to have a representation equal to the most opulent counties and cities; while other towns and places, which have risen into consideration, and become populous and wealthy, have no representatives in Parliament.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that, according to the most received calculations, the number of inhabitants of England and Wales is above five millions.

That of these nearly twelve hundred thousand are supposed capable of voting, as the Constitution stood before the restrictive Act above quoted.

That of this number not more than two hundred and fourteen thousand are at present admitted to vote.

That out of these, one hundred and thirty thousand freeholders elect ninety-two members for fifty-two counties.

Forty-three thousand citizens, freemen and others, elect fifty-two members for twenty-three cities and two universities.

And forty-one thousand electors choose three hundred and sixty-nine members for one hundred and ninety-two towns and boroughs.

That fifty of these members are returned by three hundred and forty electors.

And a number, scarcely above six thousand, being a majority of the voters of a hundred and twenty-nine of the boroughs, return two hundred and fifty-seven representatives, which is a majority of the whole English House of Commons, and the efficient representation of above five millions of people.

That it appears to this Sub-Committee, that many of these boroughs are immediately under the influence of the Crown, as the cinque ports; many of them private property, affording hereditary seats, as those under burgage tenure, and some of them almost without houses or inhabitants, as Gatton, Newtown, and Old Sarum.

That considering the representation with reference to property, it appears, that many counties return a number of representatives, out of all proportion to what they contribute to the public revenue, as is evident from the stating a single instance—that Cornwall has been calculated to pay to land-tax and supply sixteen parts out of five hundred and thirteen, and sends members to Parliament forty-four, while Middlesex pays not less than in the proportion of two hundred and fifty-six, and sends members eight.

So that it appears to this Sub-Committee, that the inequality of the representation of this country, with regard to property, is still greater than when estimated according to the number of its inhabitants.

(Signed) by order of the } R. B. SHERIDAN, Chairman,
Sub-Committee

Resolved, That ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS are the undoubted right of the People of England, and that the Act which prolonged their duration was *subversive of the Constitution*, and a violation on the part of the representatives of the sacred trust reposed in them by their constituents.

Resolved,

Resolved, That the present state of the representation of this country is inadequate to the object, and a departure from the first principles of the Constitution.

C. J. Fox, Chairman.

WESTMINSTER COMMITTEE.

King's Arms Tavern, Palace-Yard, March 22, 1780.

Resolved, That this Committee will persevere unremittingly in support of the Petitions, and of such measures as tend to reduce the unconstitutional influence of the Crown, and for that purpose are ready to UNITE THEMSELVES IN A GENERAL ASSOCIATION.

Resolved, That the obtaining of a law for taking the suffrages of the People in such a mode as to prevent both expence in elections and the operation of undue influence therein, is necessary towards the freedom of Parliament.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that a diligent examination ought to be made into all the branches of the receipt, expenditure, and mode of keeping and passing accounts of public money, in order to obtain the Plan of REFORM requested by the Petitions of the People.

C. J. Fox, Chairman.

COUNTY of YORK.

FORM OF AN ASSOCIATION,

Agreed to by the Committee of sixty-one, to be recommended to the General Meeting of the county of York, held March 28, 1780.

Whereas, during the present expensive and unfortunate war, the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of this kingdom have been greatly diminished; the public burdens grievously augmented by the annual imposition of new and additional taxes; the national debt enormously increased; and the undue influence of the Crown extended to an alarming degree by those very circumstances which threaten the utter impoverishment of this country:

And whereas, in these times of national difficulty and distress, a just redress of grievances can only be expected from a free and uncorrupted Parliament; and measures tending, in a legal and peaceful way, to RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT, cannot effectually be supported but by a GENERAL UNION of independent men throughout the kingdom:

We whose names are under-written, considering an economical reformation in the expenditure of public money to be a most essential and necessary measure for RESTORING THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT;

And considering also, that the representation of the People in Parliament is become extremely unequal, inasmuch that a great majority of members is returned by decayed and indigent boroughs, which are either at the command of the Crown, and a few great families, or else open to general venality; whence support in Parliament may be obtained

ed for the measures of any Administration, however ruinous they may be to the great landed and commercial interests of this kingdom, contrary to the true intent and use of the institution of Parliaments; which unequitable distribution of the right to elect Representatives in Parliament is now a principal cause of our numerous public evils, to which no radical cure is likely to be applied, till a **MORE ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE** hath been established by law.

And considering further, that when the fund of corruption hath been in some competent degree reduced, and **A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE** obtained, more frequent elections might be restored, not only to the great content of the People, but with certain advantage to the honor and integrity of Parliament itself, without the mischievous consequence of exposing independent gentlemen to vexatious contests with the dependents of any Administration,

We do declare our assent to

1. The *economical reform* requested by the Petitions of the People; that plan of strict and rigid frugality now indispensibly necessary in every department of the state; that most important regulation for reducing the unconstitutional influence of the Crown.
2. The proposition for obtaining a **MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION** in Parliament, by the addition of at least one hundred knights, to be chosen in a due proportion by the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain.
3. The proposition for members of the House of Commons to be elected to serve in Parliament for a term *not exceeding three years*.

And in order more effectually to promote this **LAUDABLE PLAN OF PUBLIC REFORMATION** by our joint assistance in a pacific way, we do **ASSOCIATE** for that express purpose, and we do testify the same by our signatures respectively. And we do resolve, jointly and separately, to support these necessary regulations to the utmost of our power, by every measure that may be perfectly agreeable to law and the Constitution. More particularly we do resolve, and do mutually and most solemnly engage, that until a reasonable reform in the expenditure of public money hath been obtained, and until regulations for returning at least one hundred additional county members to Parliament, and for **SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT** to a term *not exceeding three years*, have been established by law, we will support, with our votes and interest, no candidate whatsoever at the next general election, or at any future election, to represent this county, or any other county or place in Parliament, from whose known integrity and attachment to our free Constitution, and his assent to these constitutional improvements, declared by signing this Association, or in such other mode as to each candidate may seem most eligible, we shall not be first fully satisfied that he will give his utmost support in Parliament to the following propositions, or to such part of the *reform* proposed thereby as shall not be then accomplished, *viz.*

1. For one or more bills to correct profusion in the expenditure of public money; to regulate the manner of making all public contracts, and the mode of keeping and passing public accounts; to reduce exorbitant emoluments of office, and to reform the abuses of sinecure places, and pensions unmerited by public service.

2. For

2. For a bill to establish greater equality in the representation of the people in Parliament, by allowing the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain to elect, in a due proportion, one hundred Knights at least in addition to the present number.

3. For a bill to **SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS, TO A TERM NOT EXCEEDING THREE YEARS.**

W I L T S.

At a meeting at Devizes, on Wednesday the 29th of March, 1780, the following letters were read:

(C O P Y .)

" S I R,

March 26, 1780.

" I am very much mortified, that it is not in my power to perform a duty, I feel so very agreeable and honourable, as that of attending the COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE AND ASSOCIATION, at Devizes, on Tuesday next, and the meeting of the county, which is to be held the subsequent day.

" The early negative put upon the enquiry into the public expenditure in the House of Lords; the refusal of any account of places and pensions held by Members of that House; the violence done to the Constitution by the arbitrary removal of the Earl of Pembroke from the Lord Lieutenancy of our county (an office which his ancestors have so long and so honourably held, I believe, from its first institution) for no other possible cause, but for having voted as a free man upon a public question; as well as by that of the Marquis of Carmarthen from the Lord Lieutenancy of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

" And in the House of Commons, the proceeding to lay new burthens, without taking any, much less *effectual* æconomical measures, in direct opposition to the prayer of our petition, as well as those of other counties; the number of taxes proposed to be superadded; some bearing very hard upon our county in particular; namely, that which regards the private brewery, besides the addition made to the severest of all duties, that on salt; when it is certain that treble the sum might have been, and may still be produced from the suppression of unnecessary offices, savings in the mode of expenditure, and other æconomical reforms, which require only integrity to accomplish; the difficulties which have been thrown in the way of a very able plan of reform now before the House;—no enquiry made into exorbitant contracts;—accountants suffered to remain with large public balances at their own disposal;—the measure for a commission of accounts taken out of independent and disinterested hands, and assumed by the authors of our distress, in such a manner, as to mock every idea of parliamentary independence, or popular enquiry;—no expectation offered by the Minister, except a possible reverfionary reduction of those places which do not contribute to the influence of the Crown, in answer to the petitions, desiring an abolition of those that do;—and, withal, a position laid down as fundamental, by the supporters of the Court and Ministers in both Houses, that the influence of the Crown is not dangerous to the Constitution, and is not increased, in contradiction to the evidence of all our senses.

" These

" These facts, I apprehend, can leave little doubt with any freeholder, who approved of the former meeting, of the necessity of immediately associating for the accomplishment of those indispensable objects, stated in our petition, in as strong terms as constitutional language can dictate.

" But I am sensible, that it must occur to our county, as it has already done to others, to consider what steps can be taken to obtain that reform of which our present Parliament gives so little hope, acting even under all its present circumstances, or what security can be had for preserving in future what we may have the good fortune to obtain in this moment of exigence. It gives me great satisfaction to find, that it has occurred to none to have recourse to other means than those purely civil as well as strictly constitutional.—Though no one feels with more concern the abuses which have taken place in the militia, and particularly the departure from the ancient, true, fundamental, and, till of late years, invariable militia principles of keeping them within their counties, except in case of actual invasion (their present distant and unnecessary removals, serving only to assimilate them to the standing army, in principle and in habits, not in discipline) I still have that confidence in our army as well as militia, as at present constituted, that I hope neither are yet so estranged from a love of the Constitution, as to give any just apprehension of danger.

" Two measures have offered themselves for consideration, which inasmuch as they affect the House of Commons merely, come unquestionably within the province of our county meeting, and cannot by any misrepresentation be construed to arise from improper motives:—The one is to **SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS**; the other, to equalize the representation, which at present confessedly bears no proportion, either to the number of people, the quantum of property, or the proportion of public contribution; nor does it hold to any rank or description whatever; but is the mere child of accident or intrigue.

" The people of England, I conceive, have, and always had, a clear, unalienable, indefeasible right, both to the one and the other, in their fullest extent, upon a stronger ground than that of any Act or Acts of Parliament. That "the House of Commons must be free in every "circumstance of its Constitution," is the foundation stone of all our Government. The same right which the people had formerly, and, through the blessing of God, exerted so happily for us, their posterity, to have Parliaments **FREQUENTLY HOLDEN**, when they were aggrieved by the Crown's with-holding them, now goes to have them **FREQUENTLY** and **EQUALLY CHOSEN**, when it appears, through the length of the **DURATION**, and the inequality of the representation, that they are still more aggrieved than they were formerly, by the total want of them.—And if this should appear to be the sense of a fair majority of the people, collected together, either in county-meetings or in any other constitutional mode, there can be no doubt, but that proper laws will be immediately enacted to restore the constitution to its first principles in these particulars; for it is not to be presumed, that the present defective representation would venture to oppose the manifest sense of those from whom they derive all their authority; much less that the House of Lords, constituted as it is, or the Crown, could be so ill-advised, as to deny their concurrence and assent to so salutary a reform, in a part of the Constitution, which more particularly belongs to the democracy.—These principles are so unalterably

ably engraven in my mind, that I should hold myself criminal in the suppression of them when called for. It will be for the county to judge, whether they will proceed to declaratory resolutions on the subject of them, and then wait till the sense of the rest of the kingdom is so far known; or whether they will be contented finally, without pushing the right of the people to its utmost extent, by insisting upon an ANNUAL ELECTION, and a total change of the representation. There are men, of whose integrity there is but one voice, and whose judgment deserves every attention throughout England, who foresee more inconvenience than I confess I do in the whole extent of these propositions. Besides, the consequences of great changes have been in all times, so uncertain, that it may be most prudent to avoid them; especially as, in the present instance, I am free to own, that, so far as I am capable of judging, every end may be obtained by the repeal of the SEPTENNIAL ACT, and a reasonable addition of county members, chosen by districts, or under some regulation, which might preclude all necessary expense. But I shall most willingly subscribe to the discretion and wisdom of the meeting in this, and every other consideration of expediency, and I dare rely upon the generosity and candour of the county and Committee, that they would put a just interpretation upon the liberty I take, meaning to assume no more than what might become any other freeholder; submitting my unreserved sentiments, in the time of distress, to their better judgment, as I cannot have the honor of attending in person, when I might explain myself more particularly upon each part, as occasion might require. I have nothing so much at heart as to prove the sincerity and consistency of my conduct upon all occasions, but most of all in the county of my residence, and among a neighbourhood whose good opinion must in the end make the comfort and honor of my life.

I have the honor to be, with great respect and consideration,

S I R,

Your most obedient, and humble servant,

SHELBOURNE.

To JOHN AUDRY, Esq. Chairman of the Wiltshire Committee.

Copy of Mr. Fox's Letter to J. AUDRY, Esq.

SIR,

March 25, 1780.

"I am extremely sorry, that it will not be in my power to attend the Wiltshire Committee on Monday next, but I hope you will have the goodness to make my excuse to them. I need make no observation on the very great effects the petitions have already had upon Parliament. The numbers who have divided in support of them, numbers sometimes amounting to a majority, are a clear and undeniable proof, that when the people have the spirit to shew themselves, they never shew themselves in vain.

"It is always hazardous to risk one's credit upon future events; but if temperate and simple PLANS of ASSOCIATION are adopted, and those plans adhered to with steadiness in the several petitioning counties and cities, I think it next to impossible, that we should not be able to

rid

rid ourselves of that overbearing influence of the Crown, which is in effect the cause of all the grievances we lament. The effects already produced by our exertions, are almost incredible, when we consider how visionary any man would have been esteemed six months ago, who had hoped to abolish, by act of Parliament, any of the places dependent upon the civil list; but we must not forget, that the little we have carried, has been carried against the effort of the Ministers, who have still the power of the country in their hands, so that all hopes of future success must depend solely upon the exertions of the people. Nothing can be more apparent, than that the servants of the Crown are united in a determination to resist all the objects you have most at heart—where they fail in strength, they have recourse to stratagem; but neither violence nor stratagem, can defeat the wishes of the people of England, if they will but persevere in firm temperate measures for obtaining them.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

C. J. Fox."

KENT, April 22, 1780.

AT a Meeting of the Committee of this County, the following letters from Edmund Burke, Esq. Sir Philip Jennings Clerke, and the Hon. C. J. Fox, Chairman of the Westminster Committee, to Lord Viscount Mahon, Chairman of this Committee, were read.

"MY LORD,

"You will be so good as to convey my most respectful acknowledgements to the Committee of the county of Kent, for their favourable acceptance of my humble, but well-meant endeavours, in a PLAN OF REFORMATION. It is a distinction of which I must ever be sensible, to be named with the worthy gentlemen who have merited their approbation, upon still better grounds. I have the honor to be, with the highest regard and esteem,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and humble servant,

EDMUND BURKE.

Charles-street, St. James's-square, April 8, 1780.

"MY LORD,

"I Have the honor of your Lordship's letter, transmitting to me the approbation of the Committee of the county of Kent of my conduct in the House of Commons.

"The best answer I can give to your Lordship, and those respectable gentlemen, is to assure them that I shall steadily persevere in those principles which have procured me so distinguishing an honor.

"The House of Peers have done *that* for the Minister which he was ashamed or afraid to do himself, and rendered my feeble endeavours to serve my country ineffectual—a bad presage of their future intentions, when REFORMS of greater consideration may come before them.

F

"Nothing

" Nothing but a firm union of the friends to freedom and the constitution can preserve our sinking liberties ; I trust *that* will prevail against that corrupt influence which has so long operated to the disgrace and ruin of this country.

" I have the honor to be, with great esteem, and with my most grateful and respectful acknowledgements to the gentlemen of the Committee,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble servant,

PHILIP JENNINGS CLERKE.

April 14, 1780.

MY LORD,

" I have the honor of transmitting to you a copy of the proceedings in Westminster-hall on the 6th instant, in which you will observe, that the form of the ASSOCIATION adopted by the city of Westminster is nearly similar to that of the county of York. There never was a time when union was more necessary than the present ; as the only hopes of those who wish to defeat the wishes of the people, are professedly founded upon supposed disagreements among the true friends of this country.

" I should long ago have transmitted to your Committee, lists of the members who have voted in the late important question, but have been unable to procure any on which I could depend. That which was printed in the news-papers was, to my own knowledge, very incorrect. I cannot close my letter without informing you, that the three following resolutions were agreed to by the House of Commons on the 6th instant.

" That it is necessary to declare, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

" That it is competent to this House to examine into, and to correct abuses in the expenditure of the Civil List revenues, as well as in every other branch of public revenue, whenever it shall appear expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do.

" That it is the duty of this House to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions presented to this House, from the different counties, cities, and towns of this kingdom."

" The numbers who voted for them were 233 ; against them 215 ; so that in one of the fullest houses that we have ever known, a compleat approbation has been given to the sentiment of the petitions, with a promise to attend to their prayers ; how that promise will be performed, it is our duty to watch ; if we persevere in our exertions, I think there is little or no doubt of obtaining our objects ; but if we are lulled into security by success, it is but too probable that the Representatives of the people may relapse into their former inattention to their constituents.

I am, my Lord, with great respect, your most obedient, and most humble servant,

C. J. Fox, Chairman.

St. James's-street, April 10, 1780.

Lord Viscount MAHON, Chairman of the Committee of the County of Kent.

Resolved,

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the following propositions do deserve the steadiest and warmest support of the friends of the constitutional liberty of this country, and that they are highly conducive to the restoring the independence of Parliament, and to the securing the freedom and rights of the people, viz.

1st. The æconomical reform requested by the petitions of the people; that plan of strict and rigid frugality, now indispensibly necessary in every department of the State; that most important regulation for reducing the unconstitutional influence of the Crown.

2dly. The proposition for obtaining a more equal representation in Parliament, by the addition of at least one hundred Members to be chosen, in a due proportion, by the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain.

And 3dly. The proposition for Members of the House of Commons to be elected to serve in Parliament for a term not exceeding **THREE YEARS**.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the said propositions are highly fit to be submitted to the consideration of the county of Kent at large.

MAHON, Chairman.

King's Head, Gloucester, March 25, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Committee for supporting the Gloucestershire Petition, held this day,

Resolved, That as we think all NATIONAL REFORM should, if possible, originate from the representatives of the people, and that, therefore, it is incumbent on the elective body, to adopt every constitutional means of obtaining a representation on which they can rely, we conceive that no step will be so conducive to this end, as the ASSOCIATION of all free and independent men to support such candidates only, at all future elections, whose principles or conduct are known to be such as will promote the objects of the REFORM proposed by the Petitioners; and by discountenancing expences at elections, and such candidates who shall be found to employ corrupt means to gain the suffrages of the people.

Resolved, That we are determined to persevere unremittingly in support of the petition, and of such legal and constitutional measures as will tend to restrain the undue influence of the Crown, and that that be a principal object of a GENERAL UNION AND ASSOCIATION.

Resolved, That obtaining a law for taking the suffrages of the people in such a mode as to prevent both expence in elections, and the operation of undue influence therein, is necessary towards securing the freedom of Parliament, and that our members be requested to support such measures in Parliament as tend to so desirable an end.

Resolved, That our members be requested to promote a diligent examination into all the branches of the receipt, expenditure, and mode of keeping and passing accounts of public money, in order to obtain the plan of REFORM requested by the petitions of the people.

J. W. JEPSON; Secretary.

At the adjourned General Meeting for the county of Gloucester, on Tuesday the 18th of April, 1780,

Sir G. O. PAUL, Bart. in the Chair.

Whereas at a General Meeting held at the Boothall in this city, on the 25th of January last, a petition addressed to the Honourable the House of Commons of Great Britain was agreed to, and afterwards signed by a most respectable body of the freeholders of this county, stating the dangerous and exhausted state of the kingdom, and complaining of the profuse expenditure of public money, and that the Crown had thereby acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, might prove dangerous to the liberties of the people; and that as the petitioners conceived the care of the national purse was by the Constitution entrusted to the custody of that Honourable House, they therefore prayed effectual and immediate redress of the abuses complained of, and that the produce of the taxes might be turned from unnecessary and corrupt purposes, to the use of the state.

And the said petition having, in compliance with the request of this Meeting, been presented to this Honourable House by the representatives of this county, Sir William Guise, Bart. one of the representatives, made his report of the proceedings of the House of Commons upon the petitions, and stated the votes of Parliament upon the different questions agitated therein.

This meeting, therefore, considering the great importance of the questions already carried in favour of their just petitions, are desirous to testify a grateful sense of the conduct of those independent men, who have so nobly stood forth in defence of the dearest interests of their country, in full confidence, that persevering with vigor in the same laudable principle, they will not, by future inattention to the trust reposed in them, frustrate the hopes of a grateful people.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be given to those worthy Members of the House of Commons who have attended to the just petitions of the people, trusting they will proceed with zeal, firmness, and judgment, till all such REFORMATION is obtained as is consistent with public liberty, and the distinct constitutional rights of each branch of the legislature.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Meeting be given to Sir George Saville, Mr. Burke, Mr. Crew, and others for the different motions made by them in favour of the requests of the petitions.

Resolved, That this meeting doth most heartily and unanimously join with the Committee in declaring their entire and zealous approbation of the legislature of this country, as placed in the free and independent concurrence of King, Lords, and Commons, in preference to every other mode of civil government; and anxiously wish its blessings may be continued to the latest posterity in its constitutional purity. But apprehending this form of legislation to be at present essentially vitiated by the treasure and offices of the community being employed by the executive to influence the legislative authority; by the inequality of representation; by the ruinous expence of election, and by septennial Parliaments, they, therefore, declare their concurrence in the following resolutions of the Committee, tending in the most constitutional manner to promote the REFORM requested by the petitioners.

I. That in order to establish national œconomy on a solid basis, all such bills should be supported in Parliament, as tend to regulate the manner

manner of making public contracts, the mode of keeping and passing public accounts, to reduce exorbitant emoluments of office, sinecure places, and unmerited pensions.

II. That they consider the **EQUALIZING THE REPRESENTATION** as indispensibly necessary towards *restoring* the Constitution to its original purity, and therefore do most earnestly recommend to the immediate attention of the Legislature, the taking the same into consideration.

III. That they conceive there arises great obstruction to the true spirit of representation, in the ruinous expences of elections, whereby men of old and respectable families, of approved principles and abilities, are frequently deterred from offering their services, and (opulence becoming indispensable) the representation falls a prey to men without any other pretensions, to the ruin of the morals and industry of the People, and to the subversion of every just motive for determining their choice. They therefore recommend to the attention of the Legislature, the forming a law or laws for taking the suffrages of the People in such mode as to prevent both expence at elections, and the operation of undue influence therein.

IV. THAT IT IS THE OPINION OF THIS MEETING, THAT SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT WILL TEND TO ITS INDEPENDENCY.

G. O. PAUL, Chairman.

HUNTINGDON COMMITTEE.

March 30, 1780.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the fullest *freedom of debate* is essentially necessary in Parliament for the discussing the great and arduous affairs of these kingdoms.

Resolved, That the late attacks on the persons of the honorable Charles Fox and the Earl of Shelburne, on pretext of offence given by words spoken in Parliament, in the freedom of debate, are highly reprehensible, and deserve the indignation of every friend of Liberty and true lover of his country.

Resolved, That the most sincere congratulations of this Committee be presented to the Earl of Shelburne on his recovery from the late wound he received in consequence of his supporting with becoming spirit the public cause of his country.

Resolved, That this Committee will unremittingly persevere in support of the Petitions, and of such measures as may tend to *reduce the unconstitutional influence of the Crown.*

Resolved, That, in order to forward such salutary purposes, it is the opinion of this Committee, that A GENERAL ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, is necessary.

R. BERNARD, Chairman.

At

April 18, 1780.

At a meeting the most numerous ever known in the County-Hall, at Huntingdon, the following

FORM OF ASSOCIATION

was unanimously agreed to, and subscribed by the Nobility, Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders there present.

Whereas the trade and manufactures of this kingdom have been greatly diminished; the price of land fallen; the national debt has been enormously increased, and the public burdens grievously augmented by the annual imposition of new and additional taxes. And whereas it appears to us, and it has been resolved, after mature deliberation, by the House of Commons, "that the influence of the Crown is increased, increasing and ought to be diminished." And whereas, in times of national difficulty and distress, a just redress of grievances can only be expected from a *free and uncorrupted Parliament*, and measures tending in a legal and peaceful way to *restore the freedom of Parliament*, cannot be effectually supported but by a **GENERAL UNION** of independent men throughout the kingdom.

We, whose names are under-written, considering that nothing can more directly tend to alleviate the public burdens, and to *restore the freedom of Parliament*, than an *oeconomical reform* in the expenditure of public money; and being further convinced, that *frequent elections* are agreeable to the spirit of the Constitution, and the best security which the People can have for the integrity of their representatives.

And considering also, that the representation of the People in Parliament is apportioned without any regard to numbers, or property, inasmuch that decayed and indigent boroughs, return as many members as the largest and most opulent counties, whence support may be obtained for the measures of any Administration, though contrary to the general sense of the nation;

We do declare our assent,

1st, To the *oeconomical reform* requested by the Petitions of the People, as the most adequate means to reduce that influence of the Crown, which the House of Commons have declared has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

2d, To the **SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS.**

3d, To the proposition for obtaining **A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE.**

And in order more effectually to promote that *reformation*, which we conceive essential to the public welfare, we do resolve, jointly and severally, to support these necessary regulations to the utmost of our power, by every measure which may be perfectly agreeable to law and the Constitution.

After which the following resolution was proposed, and also unanimously agreed to, *viz.*

Resolved, That the Committee of Correspondence be appointed a Committee of **ASSOCIATION**, and be empowered to add to their number, and to send Deputies to meet the Deputies from the other Associations;

sociations; and to take all such legal and constitutional measures as to the Committee shall appear most expedient for promoting the objects of this Association.

R. BERNARD, Chairman.

DERBY, *March 30, 1780.*

AT a numerous and respectable meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Derby, the following Petition to Parliament was unanimously agreed to.

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Derby,

Sheweth,

That the many burdens which your Petitioners, and the kingdom in general, now labour under, would be less grievous were they not attended with the mortifying reflection, that the grants of Parliament are shamefully misapplied, and have been enormously increased by extravagant and unmerited pensions, sinecures, and inefficient places; which serve to no purpose, but to lessen the respect and independence of Parliament, and to deprive government, in a considerable degree, of the powers of carrying on the war against our natural enemies with the necessary vigour.

The decrease of our commerce, the fall of rents, the distress of our manufacturers, are evils which every individual must feel, who is not lost to all sense of his own situation, and to all feeling of the common calamity; and those evils, we apprehend, can only be remedied by a careful attention to the management of the public treasure.

Your Petitioners, therefore, appealing to the justice of this honorable House, do most earnestly request (both for the relief of the subject and the security of the Constitution) that effectual measures may be taken, that the supplies granted by Parliament may be faithfully applied to the national advantage, and to such purposes only for which they were granted; that such regulations may take place as shall bring the public expenditure, and all unreasonable contracts, to a speedy and strict account; and that an effectual plan may be adopted for the reduction of all exorbitant emoluments, and the abolition of all sinecure places and unmerited pensions; that the present and all future ministers may by such means be deprived of the power of improper influence, fatally detrimental to the interests of the People.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

After which the following resolutions were also unanimously agreed to, viz.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to his Grace the Duke of Rutland, his Grace the DUKE OF PORTLAND, the Right Hon. Lord de Ferrars, and others, for signifying (by letter or otherwise) their approbation of this meeting.

Resolved,

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to those members of the House of Commons who have hitherto supported Mr. BURKE's Bill.

(Signed) NIGEL B. GRESLEY.

CAMBRIDGE.

AT a meeting of the Committee of this county, held at the Rose Tavern, Cambridge, April 1, 1780, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that Petitions to Parliament are the ancient and undoubted right of the People of England. That every method taken to represent the present peaceable and constitutional Petitions of the People, as originating in disaffection to the Constitution, or tending to promote dissension in the state, is a daring violation of that right, and an unmerited calumny on the intentions of those who have supported them.

Resolved, That the chairman of this Committee be requested to express to the Right Hon. the Earl of Shelburne the great concern which this Committee felt at the danger to which a life so valuable as his Lordship's has lately been exposed, in consequence of his manly support of the RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE in Parliament, against the undue influence of the Crown and the extravagant profusion of the public money.

RUTLAND, Chairman.

At a meeting of the Gentry Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Cambridge, held by adjournment on April 10, 1780, the following paper was twice read.

Whereas the Committee appointed at the last county meeting for effectually promoting the object of the Petition to Parliament then agreed to, and for preparing a Plan of ASSOCIATION, on legal and constitutional grounds, to support that LAUDABLE REFORM, and such other measures as may conduce to RESTORE THE FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT, have received authentic information that the general allegation of the said petition, and of many other petitions, from various counties, cities, and boroughs, respecting the influence of the executive power over the Representatives of the People, hath been taken into consideration, and admitted by the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, as just and well founded; And whereas the said Commons have resolved, that the increased and increasing influence of the Crown (or in words to that effect) ought to be diminished.

And whereas this very important resolution of the said Commons, was followed by other resolutions tending to a *laudable Reform* in the expenditure of public money, and to establish the *independence of Parliament* on the most lasting foundations; the Committee taking these and other circumstances into their most serious consideration, and being desirous of shewing all proper respect to the deliberations, and of plac-

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ing a due reliance on the discretion and integrity of the Representatives of the People, do for these reasons decline for the present proposing any *Plan of Association*, sincerely trusting that the House of Commons, having made so noble a beginning, will be animated with a zeal to persevere, in deserving the highest confidence, and the warmest thanks of their constituents and fellow-subjects.

The Committee are thoroughly sensible, that, from the vicissitudes incident to all human establishments, the civil Constitution of this country hath suffered, in the course of less than a century, some change, and that it doth at present stand in need of some *reform*: but whether that reform may be best accomplished by recurring to triennial Parliaments, by disfranchising the lesser boroughs, by increasing the number of the knights of the shires, by regulating the expenditure of the public money, or by other means, they do not at present think proper to declare their opinion, being persuaded that the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, having signified their inclination to make a reform, do not stand in need of being instructed in the way of doing it.

The Committee being actuated by the most unfeigned regard for the Constitution of their country, feel a satisfaction which cannot be expressed in hoping that the Representatives of the People, called upon as they are by the voice of the People, will unite in healing our internal divisions, by confirming our confidence in their integrity; will conspire as zealously in protecting the prerogative of the Crown from all attempts to lessen it, as in protecting the representation of the People from that corrupting influence which forebodes the ruin of the Constitution, and which they in their wisdom have already solemnly resolved ought to be diminished.

After which the following resolution was unanimously agreed to:

Resolved, That the sincerest thanks of this General Meeting be given to the two hundred and thirty-three members of the House of Commons who composed the majority on the three following resolutions of that House on the 6th inst.

1st, That it is necessary to declare, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

2d, That it is competent to the House of Commons to examine into and to correct the abuses in the expenditure of the civil list revenue, whenever it shall seem expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do,

3d, That it is the duty of the House of Commons to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the Petitions presented from the different counties, cities, and towns of this kingdom.

Guildhall, London, April 3, 1780.

Committee of Common-Council for *corresponding* with the Committees appointed or to be appointed by the several counties, cities, and boroughs in this kingdom.

Resolved, That this Committee doth approve and adopt a Plan of ASSOCIATION similar to that of York.

A Common-Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on April 7, 1780.

Notice having been taken by a member of this Court of the danger the life of the Earl of Shelburne had been exposed to, in consequence of his upright and spirited conduct in Parliament, the following letter was unanimously agreed to.

MY LORD,

The Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the city of London, take the earliest opportunity of their meeting to congratulate your Lordship on your recovery.

This city feels a peculiar degree of gratitude and affection to your Lordship on account of the constant assistance which you have afforded her, whenever the property or privileges of this Corporation have been attacked, or her motives misrepresented; but in the present compliment she only joins with the public in expressing anxiety for the preservation of a most valuable life, endangered in consequence of a parliamentary exertion of public virtue.

The noble and manly proof which your Lordship has given, in your letter to the county of Wilts, of your decided concurrence in the undoubted **RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO SHORTEN PARLIAMENTS**, and the **NECESSITY of a MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION**, cannot but increase our regard, esteem, and confidence; and your Lordship, in your further prosecution of those great constitutional objects, may depend on the most firm and determined support from the city of London.

After which the following resolutions were proposed, and also unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Court be given to John Dunning, Esq. for having moved, in a Committee of the House of Commons, on the 6th inst. "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

Resolved, That the thanks of this Court be given to Thomas Pitt, Esq. for having moved, in a Committee of the House of Commons, on the 6th inst. "That it is the duty of this House to provide, as far as may be, an *immediate and effectual* redress of the abuses complained of in the Petitions presented to this House from the counties, cities, and towns in this kingdom."

A Common Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on April 13, 1780.

Mr. Remembrancer acquainted this Court, that he had waited on the Earl of Shelburne with a letter agreed to on the 7th inst. and on John Dunning, Esq. and Thomas Pitt, Esq. with the thanks of this Court, agreed to the same day; that he had since received the following answers, which were severally read.

T.

To the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the city of London.

MY LORD and GENTLEMEN,

I esteem myself highly honored by the distinction conferred upon me by your letter of the 7th instant. The line of my life has been always devoted to the Public. The support of the city of London is the most honorable incentive I am capable of feeling, as well as the strongest preservative against despondency.

The proposals for **SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS**, and towards **EQUALIZING THE REPRESENTATION**, now before the Public, will certainly meet my zealous concurrence, whenever they shall appear to be the public sense. My principles do not lead me to influence the political opinion of any man or body of men; but I have considered it as an indispensable duty to omit no occasion of declaring my own in the most explicit manner at this juncture.

My opinion of the **RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE** is unalterable. I am farther convinced of the present expediency of both proposals. The obstinate and artful opposition of Ministry to every substantial proposition, who persist in devoting means, entrusted for very opposite purposes, to this pernicious one, has occasioned such fluctuating divisions, as preclude any system, or the hope of any plan of *substantial reform*, being carried into fair execution; some interposition is therefore necessary; and as it is universally acknowledged, that the approaching election has a considerable influence on the members who now support the Petitions of the People, and as the county members are understood to have voted, for the most part, uniformly on the same side, nothing appears to my mind so natural or so reasonable as to follow where those principles lead, by desiring that *Parliaments may be shortened, an equitable addition or substitution be made of county members*, which may be appointed to be chosen by districts, or in some other mode, to render all *undue influence* nugatory.

And it must be highly satisfactory to every lover of quiet, as well as of the Constitution, to reflect, that so wise has been the original framer of our Government, as to furnish from within itself these principles, by recurring to which every fundamental may be secured without risking any novelty whatever, and a **FREE PARLIAMENT** obtained, through whose medium alone we can recover our weight in Europe, avert fresh calamities from abroad, and without further delay fix on some adequate plan for restoring union throughout our distracted empire, as far as past infatuation will admit.

I earnestly pray, that God may dispose the minds of every part of the Constitution, speedily to acquiesce under the public sense, and beg leave to assure you, that I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration and respect,

My Lord and Gentlemen,

Your obliged and faithful humble servant,

Shelburne-house,
April 12, 1780.

SHELburne, W

To the Remembrancer of the city of London.

SIR,

I am to desire the favor of you to convey to the Court of Common Council my acknowledgement of the honor they have done me by their unanimous resolution, importing their thanks to me for having moved in a Committee of the House of Commons, "that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

Be so good as to assure them of the just sense I entertain of the value of their approbation of any part of my public conduct; and, upon the present occasion, to congratulate them in my name on the success of the motion, by which the House of Commons ought to consider itself as pledged to follow the principle they have established to its proper conclusion. I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

*Lincoln's-Inn,
April 11, 1780.*

J. DUNNING.

To Peter Roberts, Esq. Remembrancer of the city of London.

SIR,

I am very sorry I was absent from home when you gave yourself the trouble of calling upon me this morning, to communicate to me the resolution which passed in the Guildhall on the 7th inst. relative to the proposition I thought it my duty to move in the House of Commons on the preceding day.

I beg you will express the high sense I entertain of the honor done me, in so flattering a testimony from the Lord Mayor and Common Council of the city of London. The weak exertions of an unconnected individual are greatly overpaid in having attracted the attention and approbation of so respectable a body.

I am, with great regard,

SIR,

Your most obedient humble servant,

*Oxford-Street,
April 10, 1780.*

THOMAS PITT.

A Common Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on April 13, 1780,

The Committee appointed by this Court, the 10th of February last, to correspond with the Committees appointed, or to be appointed, by the several counties, cities, and boroughs, in this kingdom, did this day deliver into this Court a report in writing, under their hands, with a **FORM OF ASSOCIATION** annexed, which were read in these words.

To the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the city of London, in Common Council assembled.

We whose names are subscribed, your Committee, appointed by this honorable Court, the 10th of February last, to correspond with the Committees

mittees appointed, or to be appointed, by the several counties, cities, and boroughs in this kingdom, do certify, that having received a letter from Mr. William Gray, jun. clerk to the York Committee, inclosing a FORM OF ASSOCIATION, agreed to by the said Committee, the 28th of March last, to be recommended to the General meeting of the county of York, your Committee have taken such Plan of Association into consideration, and having made some alterations therein do approve and adopt the same as altered, which plan they have hereunto annexed; and your said Committee beg leave to recommend the same to this honorable Court, as the most proper and eligible plan that can be laid down for the purpose therein intended; and further, your Committee are of opinion, that copies thereof should be circulated throughout the kingdom, and that the citizens of London in particular be invited to subscribe their names to such Plan, which should be left at some convenient place or places for that purpose.

And your Committee further beg leave to recommend to this honorable Court a resolution which they have lately come to,

"THAT IT IS THE OPINION OF THIS COMMITTEE,
"THAT ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, OR MORE OFTEN IF
"NEED BE, ARE THE UNALIENABLE RIGHT OF THE
"PEOPLE OF ENGLAND, AND OUGHT TO BE OBTAINED
"IN PREFERENCE TO ANY LONGER PERIOD."

Resolved unanimously, That this Court doth agree with the Committee in their said report, and approve and adopt the FORM OF ASSOCIATION therein recommended.

Resolved, That the said Form of Association be recommended to the Citizens of the city of London, as a proper and necessary Plan for them to subscribe and enter into, for effecting the salutary purposes mentioned in such Association, and that it be left at the Town-clerk's office, to give the said Citizens an opportunity of signing the same.

A member presented to this Court an extract of a Letter from the late Earl of Chatham to the late Earl Temple, dated April 17, 1774, which was read, and ordered to be entered in the Journal of this Court, as follows.

"Allow a speculator, in a great chair, to add, that a Plan for more EQUAL REPRESENTATION, by additional *Knights of the Shire*, seems highly seasonable; and to SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS not less so. If your Lordship should approve, could Lord Lyttelton's caution be brought to taste those ideas, we should take possession of strong ground, let who will decline to follow us. One line of men, I am assured, will zealously support, and a respectable weight of law.—*Si quid novisti rectius istis candidus imperti.*"

Resolved, That the Committee appointed the 10th of February last, for corresponding with the Committees appointed, or to be appointed, by the several counties, cities, and boroughs in the kingdom, be continued as a Committee of ASSOCIATION, to carry on the necessary correspondence, and promote, by every legal means, the objects of such Association.

DEVON.

DEVONSHIRE, April 4, 1780.

AT a meeting of the Committee, this day held, the following resolutions were agreed to.

Resolved, That obtaining a law for taking the suffrages of the People in such a mode as to prevent both expence in elections and the operation of undue influence therein, is necessary towards *securing the freedom of Parliament.*

Resolved, That it is proper, that a diligent examination should be made into all the branches of the receipt, expenditure, and mode of keeping and passing accounts of public money, in order to obtain the *Plan of Reform* requested by the Petitions of the People.

Resolved, That we think it expedient, that there be sent to the House of Commons, in addition to the present representatives of counties, a number of members, not less than one hundred, to be chosen in a due proportion, by the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to EDMUND BURKE, Esq. for the very salutary and meritorious plan submitted by him to the House of Commons, the 11th of February last.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Members of both Houses of Parliament, who have moved and given their concurrence and support to the motions made and bills brought in to prevent the profuse expenditure of public money, and to reduce the undue influence of the Crown.

Resolved, That this meeting do present their congratulations to the Earl of Shelburne on his recovery, and to express the great concern which they have felt for the danger to which he has been lately exposed, in consequence of his upright and spirited conduct in Parliament.

Resolved, That it be recommended to such gentlemen of this county, who are members of the House of Commons, that they do give the most diligent attendance to their duty in Parliament, upon the important business now depending, and particularly to the several Bills moved by Mr. BURKE for a PUBLIC REFORM, and that they use their utmost endeavors to SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That this Committee do send Deputies, to confer from time to time with such members as may be deputed from other Committees, upon the most effectual mode of supporting the objects of the Petitions, on legal and constitutional ground, and of *restoring the due freedom of Parliament.*

WESTMINSTER, April 5, 1780.

The following letter was laid before the Committee.

Lord Shelburne presents his compliments to Sir Cecil Wray, Mr. Brand Hollis, and Dr. Jebb. The honorable mention and approbation given by the Westminster Committee to his conduct in Parliament, and their late obliging expressions concerning his health affect him in a very sensible manner. He begs permission to say he was still more flattered when he found them communicated to him by a deputation of gentlemen,

men, for whose character, zeal, and honourable intentions he has been used to bear so high a respect; he begs that they will have the goodness to assure the Committee, as his best return to their attentions towards him, that his services and life will always remain devoted to the public, and that he has no other aim and wish than to persevere in a conduct which has merited their thanks.

Berkeley-square, March 28.

Honorable C. J. FOX, in the Chair.

Resolved, That the FORM OF ASSOCIATION agreed to by the COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE, be submitted to the adjourned General Meeting of the City and Liberties of Westminster, be now read.

[*The Form of Association and six first Resolutions are the same as those of York.*]

Resolved, that the inhabitants paying taxes to Government, who live in the suburbs of the city and liberties of Westminster, viz. in such streets, squares, or places, as are adjacent to or in the neighbourhood of the said city and liberties, and not within the city or liberties of London, be admitted to accede to this Association.

King's-Arms Tavern, April 18, 1780.

It appearing to this Committee, among other grievances established by those acts which prolonged the DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS beyond their constitutional period, that it is a hardship both on the constituent and representative body that no member, however desirous, can vacate his seat in Parliament, however unable he may become to attend his duty and execute the trust reposed in him, without having recourse to the subterfuge of applying for a nominal place; and it appearing that the Minister's power, in most cases, to grant or refuse such application, forms a part of that unconstitutional influence of which the petitions of the people complain, and which Parliament has "now declared ought to be diminished."

Resolved, That it appears to this Committee, that the resolutions of the House of Commons on the 6th of April, viz. "That it is necessary to declare, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished:" "That it is competent to that House to examine into and correct abuses in the expenditure of the civil list revenues, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall appear expedient to the wisdom of that House so to do;" and "That it is the duty of that House to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions presented to that House from the different counties, cities and towns of this kingdom;" form a solemn pledge to the constituents, that they will unremittently persevere in procuring solid and substantial redress to the various grievances of the people of England.

Resolved, That a Sub-Committee be appointed, consisting of nine persons, to consider of and form upon constitutional grounds such proper plan for taking the suffrages of the people at the election of their representatives in Parliament, as may prevent as much as possible bribery and undue influence in the electors and the elected.

Re,

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to John Dunning, Esq. for the several salutary and constitutional motions made by him in the House of Commons, asserting the right of that House to controul the expenditure of the public revenue in all its branches, tending to the immediate redress of the grievances complained of in the petitions of the people, to diminish the corrupt influence of the Crown, so fatally prevalent in that House, and to **RESTORE THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.**

Resolved, That copies of the **FORM OF ASSOCIATION**, agreed to by the General Meeting of this city and liberties do lie at the following places, to receive the signature of such of the inhabitants of this city and liberties, and of the suburbs thereof, as shall think proper to sign the same.

Brawn's-Head, Bond-street, King's-Arms Tavern, Palace-Yard, Westminster, Freemason's Tavern, Great-Queen-street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

Resolved, That this Committee do adjourn to Tuesday next, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon.

C. J. Fox, Chairman.

S U R R E Y.

St Alban's Tavern, April 7, 1780.

Resolved unanimously, That the Chairman be desired to acquaint the Earl of Shelburne with the strong sense that this Committee entertains of the manly support which his Lordship has always given to the cause of the people; and at the same time, to express the great concern which they have lately felt at the danger to which so valuable a life has been exposed, in consequence of the faithful and spirited discharge of his duty as a peer in Parliament.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Committee be given to John Dunning, Esq. for his constitutional support of the **RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE** at all times, and particularly for having brought into immediate consideration their petitions.

Resolved, that the thanks of this Committee be given to the 233 Members of the House of Commons who composed the majority on the three following resolutions of that House on the 6th instant, viz.

1st, That it is necessary to declare, **THAT THE INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN HAS INCREASED, IS INCREASING, AND OUGHT TO BE DIMINISHED.**

2d, That it is competent to the House of Commons to examine into, and to correct the abuses in the expenditure of the civil list revenue, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall seem expedient to the wisdom of the House so to do.

3d, That it is the duty of the House of Commons to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions presented from the different counties, cities, and towns in this kingdom.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that a general union amongst those persons who have shewn themselves friends to public œconomy, and the reduction of the **UNCONSTITUTIONAL**
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AND ENORMOUS INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN, is absolutely necessary towards forming A PLAN OF ASSOCIATION to carry the object of the petition into effect.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the best and most likely method of preserving UNION among the friends of this country is that of considering the avowed object of their petitions, for eradicating the cause of corruption, originating in the undue influence of the Crown, and establishing public œconomy, as the first and immediate object of their consideration and pursuit.

Resolved, That a PLAN OF ASSOCIATION be prepared to be submitted to the County Meeting, at Epsom, on Friday the 14th instant.

FRANCIS VINCENT, Chairman.

[The Plan of Association and the first four Resolutions are the same with those of York.]

5. Resolved, That it be an instruction of this Meeting to the Committee now appointed, to endeavour, as soon as may be convenient, to procure a general deputation from all such petitioning bodies as shall have ASSOCIATED for the purpose of obtaining a redress of the national grievances, to be held in the city of London; such deputation having full power and authority from their respective Committees to consult and determine upon a GENERAL UNION in such constitutional measures as shall to them appear necessary for the attainment of the object.

6. Resolved, That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Gentlemen who composed the Committee for this county, for the diligence and wisdom with which they have conducted the important business referred to them by the General Meeting of the county.

7. Resolved, That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

8. Resolved, That this Meeting be adjourned, subject to a call by the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION.

FRANCIS VINCENT, Chairman.

ESSEX,

Chelmsford, April 8, 1780.

Whereas there hath been this day transmitted to this Committee, from the general Meeting of Deputies, appointed by the several petitioning counties, cities and towns, a copy of their resolves, containing propositions for a GENERAL PLAN OF ASSOCIATION, and also a MEMORIAL justifying the said propositions.

Resolved unanimously, That this Committee are of opinion that the said resolves are formed upon good policy for bringing all the said petitioning counties, cities, and towns, and others which have not petitioned Parliament for a redress of national grievances, into that well compacted union, which cannot fail of giving success in the end to the prayers of the people, by repairing the injuries which this Constitution hath suffered, and by eradicating from it that dangerous influence of the Crown, which hath nearly sapped its foundations.

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And

And whereas it is requested by the said meeting of Deputies, that this, as well as any other Committee, would take the most effectual means for circulating their said memorial through the kingdom, by which they trust all men will be impressed with the propriety of those measures which they have proposed.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Committee be given to Sir Robert Smyth, Bart. R. Muilman Trench Chifwell, Esq. and Richard Baker, Esq. the Deputies from this Committee to the General meeting of Deputies; for their faithful execution of the important trust reposed in them, and their temperate and judicious conduct in support of the opinions of the Committee.

Resolved, that the most sincere congratulations of this Committee be presented to the Earl of Shelburne, on his recovery from the late wound he received in consequence of his supporting with becoming spirit the public cause of his country.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to John Luther, Esq. our worthy Representative in Parliament, and to the 233 other Members, including the Teller, for the votes they gave in the House of Commons, on Thursday the 6th of April, upon the Resolution moved by John Dunning, Esq. "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

ROBERT SMYTH, Chairman.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COMMITTEE.

Star and Garter, Pall Mall, April 10, 1780.

Resolved unanimously, Whereas during the present expensive and unfortunate war, the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of this kingdom, have been greatly diminished: the public burdens grievously augmented by the annual imposition of new and additional taxes; the national debt enormously increased, and the undue influence of the Crown extended to an alarming degree, by those very circumstances which threaten the utter impoverishment of this country; and whereas in these times of national difficulty and distress, a just redress of grievances can only be expected from a free and uncorrupted Parliament, and measures tending in a legal and peaceful way, to restore the FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT, cannot effectually be supported but by a general union of independent men throughout the kingdom.

We, whose names are underwritten, considering an æconomical reformation in the expenditure of public money, to be a most essential and necessary measure, for restoring the FREEDOM OF PARLIAMENT; considering also, that measures may be taken for securing upon a permanent system, the independency of Parliament.

We do declare our assent to the æconomical reform requested by the petitions of the people, that plan of strict and rigid frugality now indispensibly necessary in every department of the state, that most important regulation for reducing the unconstitutional influence of the Crown.

Therefore we do pledge ourselves to keep in view, the great and alarming grievances stated in our petition to the House of Commons, and to unite in all legal methods of restraining the increased influence of the Crown, and we declare it to be our opinion, that the resolutions of the House of Commons of the 6th of April, form a basis, upon which may be founded measures leading to a diminution of the undue influence

ence of the Crown, and the material reform of the public expenditure. We do therefore in all confidence and earnestness hope and expect, from the wisdom of Parliament, such measures as may alleviate the many miseries under which we labour, and may restore the harmony, dignity, and happiness of this distracted country; and in order that we may contribute our efforts to support that system of independence in Parliament, upon which alone our hopes of attaining these great ends can be founded, we do engage to support, at the next and every future election within this county, such candidates only as we shall be convinced, from their known integrity and attachment to the constitution, will support these great and essential objects of public REFORM.

Upon the fullest and most serious conviction of the necessity of these measures, and with the most solemn determination of transmitting to our posterity that BIRTHRIGHT OF FREEDOM, founded on the constitution which we received from our ancestors, we do unite to the support of these great and constitutional objects, and engage ourselves to them by every tie which can be the most binding upon Englishmen.

JOHN SEARE, Chairman.

HERTFORD, *April 17, 1780.*

AT the adjourned general Meeting of the county of Hertford, held this day at the Shire-house in the town of Hertford, the following plan of Association was agreed to:

ASSOCIATION.

Whereas a petition agreed on at a general Meeting of this county, on Monday the 17th of January last, praying for an economical reform in the expenditure of public money, and for a reduction of the influence of the Crown, has been presented to the House of Commons, in the names of the freeholders of this county, and no effectual redress has yet been obtained of the abuses therein stated—

We, the nobility, gentlemen, clergy, and Freeholders of the said county, considering the various arts which have been used by the enemies of our happy Constitution, to misrepresent our motives and conduct, in promoting the said petition, do thus publicly declare our entire and zealous approbation of the legislature of this country, as placed in the free and independent concurrence of King, Lords, and Commons, and that we most anxiously and sincerely wish the blessing of this form of legislature may be continued to our latest posterity. And seeing the necessity of a speedy reformation of the abuses and grievances mentioned in the said petition, do agree to unite and ASSOCIATE ourselves, and to encourage all other land-owners of this country to ASSOCIATE with us, for the purpose of obtaining a bill or bills to diminish the increased and increasing influence of the Crown, to correct profusion in the expenditure of the public money, to regulate the manner of making all public contracts, and the mode of keeping and passing public accounts, to reduce exorbitant emoluments of office; to reform the abuses of sinecure places and pensions unmerited by public service, and to limit the number of placemen sitting in Parliament.

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And

And in order more effectually to promote this salutary plan of public reformation, we do jointly and separately resolve unremittingly to persevere in supporting, to the utmost of our power, these and all other regulations necessary for obtaining the objects proposed in the said petition; and we testify the same by our signatures respectively.

1. Resolved, That a bill to establish greater equality in the representation of the people in parliament, by allowing the several counties of the kingdom of Great Britain to elect in a due proportion one hundred knights, at least, in addition to the present number, and to **SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT**, may tend to promote the said REFORM.

2. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that carrying on a war against North America is most evidently a measure, which by employing our great and enormously expensive military operations against the inhabitants of that country, prevents this from exerting its united, vigorous, and firm efforts against the powers of France and Spain; and has no other effect upon America, than to continue and thereby to increase, the enmity which has so long, and so fatally subsisted between the two countries, can be productive of no good whatsoever,—but by preventing conciliation, threatens the accomplishment of the final ruin of the British empire.

3. That it be an instruction of this meeting to their Committee now appointed, to endeavour to procure, as soon as may be convenient, a general deputation from all such petitioning bodies as shall have ASSOCIATED for the purpose of obtaining redress of the national grievances, to be held in the city of London or Westminster; to compare their several plans of association, and to consult upon a general union in such constitutional measures, as to them shall appear necessary for the attainment of the above objects; subject to such further instructions as the General Meeting of this county may think fit to give.

GEORGE JENNINGS, Chairman.

The Petition and Resolutions of the County of Denbigh, March 29, 1780,

To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

We, the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Denbigh, think it our duty as Britons, and in compliance with the general sense of the whole kingdom, to petition the Honorable the House of Commons to enquire, with all diligence and fidelity, into the disposal of those enormous sums, which in virtue of the trusts reposed in them by the people, they have lately granted, or shall grant in future to Government.

The universal calamities which not only affect the public, but find their way into every private family, even at this distance from the seat of Government, are a proof how little we are able to support the weight of Ministerial profusion, which every year grows heavier, and is more severely felt. We, therefore, most strongly make it our request: and petition to this Honorable House, as to the upright representatives of their fellow citizens, to abolish all sinecures, to retrench all unmerited pensions, to sink all unnecessary places, and to reduce all exorbitant salaries

salaries and perquisites, that in our state of national poverty, what is left of the public revenue may be frugally managed. We own, too, we have a motive in this Petition beyond the views of œconomy. We wish to lessen, by all possible means, those funds of corruption, which good ministers never want, and which only make bad men more worthless and dangerous.—We wish that our representatives may secure to themselves the confidence of the People, by having no interest separate from their's.—And we flatter ourselves that our Petition has a just title to the approbation of this honorable House, since by granting it they will vindicate their own integrity, and qualify themselves for those great disinterested views and measures which may possibly become necessary to save our country.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

MIDDLESEX.

AT the adjourned General Meeting of the county of Middlesex, held at Hackney the 11th of April, 1780,

JAMES TOWNSEND, Esq. in the Chair,

A Form of ASSOCIATION similar to that of York, and the five first resolutions of that county, were proposed and agreed to; after which the following resolutions were also unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That it be an instruction of this meeting to the Committee now appointed, to endeavour, as soon as may be convenient, to procure a *Deputation* from all such Petitioning Bodies as shall have ASSOCIATED for the purpose of obtaining a *redress of the national grievances*, to be held in the city of London; such deputation having full power and authority from their respective Committees to consult and determine upon a GENERAL UNION in such constitutional measures as shall to them appear necessary for the attainment of the above object.

Resolved, That the members for this county be instructed to take the most proper measures (whenever there shall be a probability of doing it with effect) for impeaching and bringing to justice, the ministers who, with the most unconstitutional and arbitrary views, have extended corruption and undue influence beyond the example of all former times, have alienated the affections of one part of the British dominions from the other, and have loaded this heretofore happy country with taxes the most intolerable and oppressive.

SOMERSET, April 11, 1780.

AT the adjourned General Meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the county of Somerset, held this day at Wells,

PHILIP STEPHENS, Esq. in the Chair,

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That this meeting do approve of the resolutions of the Committee, assembled at the Swan Inn, Wells, on the 28th of March last, and in order more effectually to promote the LAUDABLE PLAN
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OF PUBLIC REFORMATION, by our joint assistance in a pacific way, we do ASSOCIATE for that express purpose, and we do hereby testify the same. And we do resolve, jointly and separately, to support these necessary regulations to the utmost of our power, by every measure that may be perfectly agreeable to law and the Constitution,

More particularly we do resolve, and do mutually and most solemnly engage, that, until a reasonable *reform* in the expenditure of public money hath been obtained, and until regulations for returning at least one hundred additional county members to Parliament, and for **SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT** to a term not exceeding three years have been established by law, we will support with our votes and interest, no candidate whatsoever at the next general election, or at any future election, to represent this county, or any other county or place in Parliament, from whose known integrity and attachment to our free Constitution, and his assent to these constitutional improvements, declared by signing this Association, or in such other mode as to each candidate may seem most eligible, we shall not be first fully satisfied that he will give his utmost support in Parliament to the following propositions, or to such part of the *reform* proposed thereby as shall not be then accomplished.

1st. For one or more Bills to correct profusion in the expenditure of public money; to regulate the manner of making all public contracts, and the mode of keeping and passing public accounts; to reduce exorbitant emoluments of office, and to reform the abuses of sinecure places and pensions, unmerited by public service.

2d. For a Bill to establish greater **EQUALITY IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT**, by allowing the several counties in the kingdom of Great Britain to elect, in a due proportion, one hundred knights at least, in addition to the present number.

3d. For a Bill to **SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS** to a term *not exceeding three years*.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the Committee appointed by this meeting to consider of and form, upon legal and constitutional grounds, a proper plan for the detecting and bringing to justice all persons who, at the ensuing general election, shall either give or receive bribes for votes for the election of Members to serve in Parliament, and that such plan, when settled and agreed upon, be communicated to other Associated Bodies.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to those worthy members of the House who have attended to the just Petitions of the People, humbly requesting that they will proceed therein with equal zeal, firmness, and judgment, until they shall have finally concluded upon some general well regulated **SYSTEM OF REFORMATION**, equally consistent with, and friendly to, **PUBLIC LIBERTY** and Justice.

Resolved, That the Committee be a **COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION**, and that fifteen or more of them be empowered to act as a Committee, and to take such legal and constitutional measures as to them shall appear most expedient for promoting the objects of this Association.

BEDFORD, April 22, 1780.

AT the adjourned General Meeting of the county of Bedford, held this day at the Sessions House at the town of Bedford, the following resolutions were moved and agreed to.

Resolved, That this meeting has great satisfaction in observing, that the Petition of this county, together with those of the several other Petitioning Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, hath been taken into consideration by the honorable the House of Commons, and admitted by them as just and well-founded, in their resolutions of the 6th instant, viz.

"That it is necessary to declare, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

"That it is competent to this House to examine into and correct abuses in the expenditure of the civil list revenue, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall appear expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do.

"That it is the duty of this House to provide as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of abuses complained of in the Petitions presented to this House from the different counties, cities, and towns of this kingdom."

Resolved, That this meeting does consider the above recited resolutions of the House of Commons as forming a solemn pledge to their constituents, that they will unremittingly persevere in their endeavors to procure solid and satisfactory redress to the various grievances of the People of England.

Resolved, That the Committee appointed at the last General Meeting be continued, with power to add to their number, and to prepare a Plan of ASSOCIATION upon legal and constitutional grounds, if deemed expedient and necessary, and to submit the same to the county at the next General Meeting.

Resolved, That this meeting will discountenance all *corrupt* and *unnecessary expences* at any future elections; as such discouragement will promote in a considerable degree the FREEDOM OF ELECTION, which must immediately tend to secure the INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this Meeting that SHORTENING the DURATION of PARLIAMENTS would tend to RESTORE THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

ESSEX.

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants, of the county of Essex, held by adjournment at the Shire-Hall, Chelmsford, April 25, 1780, a Plan of ASSOCIATION, similar to that of York, was agreed to by the Committee, and recommended to this General Meeting.

After which the following resolutions were also unanimously agreed to, viz.

Resolved,

Resolved, That this FORM OF ASSOCIATION be adopted by this meeting.

Resolved, That the Committee of Correspondence be appointed a Committee of ASSOCIATION, and be empowered to add to their number, and to take such legal and constitutional measures as to them shall appear most expedient for promoting the object of this ASSOCIATION.

Resolved, That it be an instruction of this meeting to the Committee now appointed, to endeavor, as soon as may be most convenient, to procure a *general deputation* from all such Petitioning Bodies as have associated for the purpose of obtaining a redress of national grievances, to be held in the cities of London or Westminster, such deputation having full power and authority from their respective Committees to compare their several Plans of Association, and to consult and determine upon a GENERAL UNION, in such constitutional measures as shall to them appear necessary for the attainment of the above object.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the Committee appointed by this meeting, to consider of, and form, upon legal and constitutional grounds, a proper plan for the detecting and bringing to justice all persons who, at the ensuing general election, shall either give or receive bribes for the election of members to serve in Parliament, and that such plan, when settled and agreed upon, be communicated to other Associated Bodies.

B E R K S.

AT the adjourned General meeting for the county of Berks, held at the Town-Hall, in Abingdon, on Tuesday the 25th day of April, 1780.

JOHN GRANT, Esq. in the Chair,

Whereas at a General Meeting, held at the said Town-Hall on the 31st of January last, a petition addressed to the Honorable House of Commons of Great Britain was agreed to, and afterwards signed by a very numerous and respectable body of the freeholders of this county, stating the dangerous and exhausted state of this kingdom, and complaining of the profuse expenditure of public money, and that the Crown had thereby acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, might prove dangerous to the liberties of the people; and that as the petitioners conceived, the care of the national purse was by the Constitution intrusted to the custody of that Honorable House, they therefore prayed effectual and immediate redress of the abuses complained of; and that the produce of the taxes might be appropriated to the uses of the state.

The said Petition was, in compliance with the request of the said meeting, presented to the said honorable House by the representatives of this county.

The meeting, therefore, considering the great importance of the questions already carried in favor of their just Petitions, are desirous to testify a grateful sense of the conduct of those independent men, who have so nobly stood forth in the defence of the dearest interests of their country, in full confidence that persevering with vigor in the same laudable principle, they will not by future inattention to the trust reposed in them, frustrate the hopes of a grateful People.

Resolved,

Resolved, That this meeting do declare most sincerely their entire and zealous approbation of the Legislature of this country, as placed in the *free and independent* concurrence of King, Lords, and Commons, in preference to every other mode of civil government, and anxiously with its blessings may be continued to the latest posterity in its *constitutional purity*; but apprehending this form of legislation to be at present *essentially vitiated*, by the treasure and offices of the Community being employed by the *executive*, to influence the *legislative*, authority; by the *inequality of Representation*; by the ruinous expence of election, and by *Septennial Parliaments*; they therefore declare their concurrence in the following resolutions of the Committee, as tending in the most constitutional manner to promote the REFORM requested by the Petitioners.

1. For one or more Bills to correct profusion in the expenditure of the public money, to regulate the manner of making all public contracts, and the mode of keeping and passing public accounts, to reduce exorbitant emoluments of office, and to reform the abuses of *sinécure places*, and pensions unmerited by public service,

2. For one or more Bills for obtaining a *more equal representation in Parliament*, by such methods as shall appear most likely to promote the INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT, and consonant to the principles of the Constitution.

3. For a Bill to *SHORTEN the DURATION of PARLIAMENTS*, to a term *not exceeding three years*.

Resolved, That the members for this county be requested to promote all such Bills as they conceive will tend to the objects before mentioned.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the Committee appointed by this meeting, to consider of and form, upon legal and constitutional grounds, a proper plan for the detecting and bringing to justice all persons who, at the ensuing General Election, shall either give or receive *bribes* for votes for the election of members to serve in Parliament, and that such plan, when settled and agreed upon, be communicated to the Committees of counties.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to those worthy members of the House of Commons, who have attended to the just Petitions of the People, trusting they will proceed with zeal, firmness, and judgment, till all such *reformation* be obtained as is consistent with the Public Liberty and the distinct constitutional rights of each branch of the Legislature.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the People of England have, and always had, a *clear, unalienable, indefeasible* RIGHT to an ANNUAL ELECTION of their Representatives, as well as to an *adequate and equal representation*, founded upon stronger grounds than that of any act or acts of Parliament; and that the attainment of these important constitutional objects is the most effectual expedient for *RESTORING and SECURING the INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT*.

DORSET.

Dorchester, April 25, 1780.

AT the adjourned General Meeting of the county of Dorset, a Form of Association similar to that of the county of Hertford was unanimously agreed to. After which the following resolutions were also adopted, and EARL TEMPLE and EARL SPENCER added to the Committee:

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the People of England have, and always had, a clear, unalienable, indefeasible RIGHT to an *adequate and equal representation*, as well as an ANNUAL ELECTION of their Representatives, founded upon stronger grounds than that of any Act or Acts of Parliament; and that the attainment of these important constitutional objects is the most effectual expedient for RESTORING and SECURING the INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That in order to remove any prejudices which may have been imbibed respecting the intentions of this Meeting, the gentlemen present think it their duty to declare, that they do not, nor ever did, mean to promote the reform requested in their County Petition of the 27th of January, by any other mode than that of peaceable demeanor, constitutional loyalty, and respectful attention to the Legislature; and that it was and is their only endeavor, by promoting integrity and economy in every department of Government, to apply the whole of the revenue to the necessities of the State, to *restore independence* to the Legislature and confidence to the People. Upon these principles, and these alone, they hope and wish to meet the concurrence and support of all *virtuous and independent* Englishmen.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Meeting be given to Sir George Savile, Mr. Thomas Pitt, Mr. BURKE, and others, for their strenuous support of the CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE.

Dr. PARRY, Chairman.

 CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY.
Nottingham, May 2, 1780.

AT a very numerous meeting, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved,

That an *Equal Representation* is the right of the People, and essential to the very idea of a representative body.

That ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS are the old constitutional usage of Parliament, the true law of the land, and the best security which can be furnished for the virtuous conduct of Parliament, and for its *independence* on every power whatsoever, unless that of the People alone.

That the present *inequalities* in the representation of the People, and the continuance of Parliaments beyond a single session, are altogether a *departure* from, and a *corruption* of, the usage and law of Parliament.

That

That to recover Parliament to its constitutional character by a more *equal representation*, and the return of ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, is no romantic object, but worthy of a free People to DEMAND, as it is within their power to obtain, and is alone adequate to their wishes.

That the holding any place, pension, or contract, at the disposal of the Crown, unless perhaps in some few instances, which may be expedient for the public business, and not dangerous to the public safety, is *absolutely incompatible* with a seat in the House of Commons.

That it is *unworthy* of the People of England, in their present state of *discontent* and *alarm*, to desist from that *vigorous*, but *legal*, prosecution of the *reform* contained in the preceding resolves; and that every thing which is essentially short of this, is but a mere temporary expedient, not affording even the promise of a permanent good to these kingdoms.

That no candidate to represent the town of Nottingham, or any county, town, or borough whatever in Parliament, who does not adopt these sentiments, and pledge himself by the honor of a man, and of a Briton, for the RECOVERY OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE, as expressed by the preceding resolves (or so much of them as can be obtained), deserves, or shall receive, our vote or interest in any application for a seat in Parliament.

That the above are our firm resolves; we adopt the *Reform* expressed therein in all its extent; but if in all its extent it should be impracticable, we will thankfully receive so much of it as can be procured, and join our fellow-citizens in the pursuit of any part of so desirable an object.

That the thanks of this Society be conveyed to Major Cartwright, for his judicious and manly conduct in every thing which affects the *Liberties of the People*, and that this Society will be happy to give him every expression of their esteem and gratitude which shall be in their power.

S. HAYWOOD, Secretary.

Report of the Sub-Committee of Westminster, appointed April 12, 1780, to take into consideration all such matters relative to the election of Members of Parliament, as may promote the purposes of the present Association.

Freemasons' Tavern, May 27, 1780.

The Sub-Committee having duly examined the various statutes of this realm, respecting the election of members to serve in the Commons' House of Parliament, more particularly such as were enacted for the purpose of guarding against the prevalence of bribery and corruption at elections, and the operation of every other species of undue influence upon the electors and elected; and reflecting upon the inefficacy of those provisions with respect to the prevention of evils, which threaten the final extinction of our *liberties*, are decidedly of opinion, that no effectual reformation of the abuses in question can take place, unless the People exercise their inherent and undoubted right of reviewing the

whole plan of delegation, and, by recurring to the first principles of our Constitution, again establish it upon its ancient foundations of equity and right reason.

When error has obtained the sanction of time, it appears to the unthinking mind under the semblance of truth; and even men of reflection, who have formed a just conception of its nature and its tendency, are in such circumstances alarmed with apprehensions at the first attempts for its correction. However, as the consequences of error, in proportion to its magnitude and extent of operation, are manifestly evil, and as constitutional errors may therefore be supposed to be unavoidably productive of national calamity, it is surely more prudent, in the proper season, to submit to the perhaps imaginary inconveniences of a *reformation*, than to suspend our exertions until we are obliged to encounter those accumulated miseries, which an obstinate perseverance in an acknowledged course of error must derive upon both prince and People.

The prevalence of evil in the present hour, proves the prevalence of error; and it does not require any extraordinary degree of sagacity in the politician and philosopher to discover, that the primary error, and the fruitful source of the many evils which we feel, consists in a departure from fundamental principles in the present Constitution of the Commons' House of Parliament; in consequence of which it is no longer obedient to the will, or speaks the language of, the great constituent body of the People.

Every application, therefore, for the redress of the present grievances of the nation, that shall be made to a body of men, no longer under the influence of their constituents, but, on the contrary, uniformly acting in subserviency to the views and interest of the Crown, must of necessity be unsuccessful; and, from the natural effect of disappointment upon the human mind, will probably impair the vigor of every future exertion.

Application to the Crown to suspend the exertions of its influence, or to repair the breaches made in that part of the Constitution, which was intended to be the bulwark of the People against its encroachments, pre-supposes such an ignorance of the principles which, in certain circumstances, are found invariably to actuate the human heart, that one would be led to imagine the use of argument would be superseded by the obvious absurdity of the expedient.

The event of the experiment, frequently repeated, has confirmed the conclusion which right reason would have suggested; and it now stands a truth, recorded for the benefit of every future generation, that when the point in question is a redress of *grievances originating in oppression*, or a restitution of the *rights and privileges* of the People, millions sue in vain!

To what earthly tribunal, therefore, shall an *injured* People have resort in this alarming moment, when a desperate faction, in the midst of public calamity and distress, has manifested a determined purpose of persevering in a line of conduct which, if persisted in, must inevitably end in the subversion of our Liberties and the desolation of our State! The sun of England's glory perhaps soon may set to rise no more.

One hope still remains in the native energy of the great collective body of the People, the native energy of a race of men who have always stood distinguished in the annals of nations for every liberal sentiment, and every generous principle that can dignify our kind.

The

The peaceful efforts of this mighty power, acting by committees freely chosen, are sufficient, under the providence of Heaven, to re-establish the constitution in its ancient vigor. The public state of affairs requires this exertion; the public voice at length appears disposed to bear its testimony to this important truth, viz.

THAT THE RESTORATION OF THE COMMONS' HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT TO FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCY, BY THE INTERPOSITION OF THE GREAT COLLECTIVE BODY OF THE NATION, IS ESSENTIALLY NECESSARY TO OUR EXISTENCE AS A FREE PEOPLE.

The circumstances of the times, and the peculiar nature of the means, which must be employed for effecting our deliverance, require, that the proposed plan be exhibited complete in all its essential forms; and that its various parts, being combined in strict and necessary union with each other, be established at one and the same moment of time.

When we cast our eyes upon the conduct of the present Commons' House of Parliament; when we behold a majority of its members, in defiance of our petitions, and their own solemn declaration, persist in encreasing the burdens of the people, and in a stedfast purpose of opposing every measure of redress, desponding apprehensions may for a time take place in the minds of the best and bravest of our countrymen. Reflection, however, will disclose a more pleasing prospect arising from the very extremity of our distress: more vigorous counsels, and an happy unanimity will be the unavoidable result; the alarm of the nobility for the very existence of their present splendid distinctions will co-operate with the poignant feelings of the people; and every rank and description of men will feel the propriety, the necessity of establishing that **PLAN OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION**, which holds forth our best, and indeed our only security, against the all-devouring influence of the crown.

Political truth, like the moral feelings of the soul, is plain and simple; it recommends itself powerfully to the general sentiment; and when unveiled in its intrinsic purity, will assuredly call forth the animated exertions of millions in its support.

An equal representation of the people in the great council of the nation, **ANNUAL ELECTIONS**, and the universal right of suffrage, appear so reasonable to the natural feelings of mankind, that no sophistry can elude the force of the arguments which are urged in their favour; and they are rights of so transcendent a nature, that in opposition to the claim of the people to their enjoyment, the longest period of prescription is pleaded in vain. They were substantially enjoyed in the times of the immortal Alfred; they were cherished by the wisest princes of the Norman line; they formed the grand palladium of our nation; they ought not to be esteemed the grant of Royal favor, nor were they at first extorted by violence from the hand of power: they are the **BIRTHRIGHT OF ENGLISHMEN**, their best inheritance, which, without the complicated crimes of treason to their country, and injustice to their posterity, they cannot alienate or resign: they form that triple cord of strength, which alone can be relied on to hold, in times of tempest, the vessel of the state.

With respect to the expediency of **REFORMING** the representation of this country, and of recurring to the constitutional practice of **ANNUALLY** electing the persons sent to Parliament, the Sub-committee observe,

That

That the General Meeting of the deputies, on the 17th of March, decided, in the affirmative, upon the propriety of these measures, with unanimous voice; that the Committee, from which this body received its instructions, have, with similar unanimity, given their suffrages to the same sentiment; and that the General Meeting of the inhabitants of Westminster, upon the 6th of April, declared, "That the people of England have, and always had, a clear, unalienable, indefeasible right to an ANNUAL ELECTION of their representatives, as well as to an adequate and equal representation, founded upon stronger grounds than that of any act or acts of Parliament; and that the attainment of these important constitutional objects is the most effectual expedient, for restoring and securing the independency of Parliament."

With regard to the restitution of the universal right of suffrage the Sub-committee conceive, that the reasonableness and expediency of the measure will probably be more apparent, if the full extent and magnitude of those powers be considered, which are entrusted to the representative by the constituent body.

The doctrine, that representation and taxation are inseparable, is founded in truth; but the undue preference that has been afforded to the rights of property, in various discussions of this subject, has tended to keep out of sight other principles, equally essential to a just conception of this question.

A portion of the soil, a portion of its produce, may be wanting to many; but every man has an interest in his life, his liberty his kindred, and his country; and when laws affecting these are made by persons, to whom he hath not delegated a power, each of these possessions, which are as substantial, as if, like land or money, they were the objects of the senses, may be invaded, and probably would be invaded by those, who, being possessed of property, the grand enchantress of the world, would thereby be enabled more successfully to gratify that lust of despotic power, which so strongly characterizes the human heart.

The exercise of the poor man's elective right is therefore essential to his freedom; and although, in ordinary cases, he may sometimes dispose of his suffrage without a proper regard to its importance, yet, when public calamity demonstrates, that public confidence has been abused, the opportunity of rectifying the evil by a more judicious delegation will probably not be neglected. Common sense will instruct him, that his own free and unbiassed voice, united with the voices of that numerous class of fellow citizens, who are his fellow sufferers at such a period, will prevail over the interested opposition of the tyrants of their species, and finally establish the real friends of humanity and of their country in the seat of power.

It may also be observed, that no consideration would have a stronger tendency to generate proper sentiments of affection to the community, and more effectually recal the minds of the rising generation from a course of dissipation and attachment to unworthy gratifications, than the perception of that share of political consequence, which the restitution of the universal right of suffrage would afford.

At a certain age all the male inhabitants of this kingdom, with a few exceptions, are subject to the obligation of serving in the militia. Shall a man therefore be thought unworthy of a suffrage in the election of his representative, and at the same time shall his fellow citizens intrust to his fidelity and courage whatever they hold dear? Is it reasonable to deny to a citizen, when he has attained to maturity in his mental capacity,

city, the common privilege of a freeman, the right of being governed by laws, to which the assent of himself or his representative has been obtained, and at the same time to avail ourselves of his bodily strength? Is it generous, is it politic, to treat him as an alien in the community, at the moment he may be ornamenting it by the powers of his understanding, or defending it by his arms?

Urged by the force of these reflections, your Sub-committee have considered the points proposed to their deliberation in their full extent. They have examined the voluminous system of laws relating to the subject of parliamentary elections, and find themselves under a necessity of pronouncing the far greater part of them to be founded upon partial conceptions, unjust restrictions, and false measures of expediency, which will not stand the test, when contrasted by the acknowledged principles of the constitution of this country.

More particularly it appears to your Sub-committee,

1. That through the joint operation of the statute of disfranchisement, passed in the eighth year of the reign of Henry VI. and the triennial bill of the sixth of William and Mary, which attempted to give the first legal sanction to the continuance of the same Parliament beyond the period of A SINGLE SESSION, the representation of the Commons of England is virtually annihilated; and an institution, which was intended to be the people's defence against aristocratic dominion, or regal domination, or regal despotism, is now become an engine in the hands of the Minister, to tax, oppress, insult, and enslave the people of this country.

2. That the present inequality in the representation in a great measure originates in an arbitrary exercise of the royal prerogative, whereby, in opposition to the clearest principles of the constitution, the crown presumed to authorize, at pleasure, certain incorporated bodies to send members to the Commons' House of Parliament; the unsuspecting people of this country at the same time not attending to the inequality, that from thence must necessarily take place in the representation, to the substantial injury of themselves, and every succeeding generation.

That in consequence of the decay of many of these corporations, and through the partiality of the crown in various periods of our history to its own tenants and dependants, there is at this time a degree of representation enjoyed by many boroughs of this kingdom, far exceeding the bounds of due proportion, and too dangerous to the public freedom to be longer endured.

3. That more than seventy acts of Parliament have been passed since the first invasion of the liberties of Englishmen in the reign of Henry VI. for the purpose of regulating elections—that tumults and disorders, bribery, perjury, and false returns, with a long train of other attendant evils, have been multiplied, in proportion as the acts were multiplied, which, under pretence of removing these evils, have in fact perpetuated them, and at the same time have abolished, and almost obliterated the remembrance of the universal right of suffrage, which forms one of the most important franchises of the English people.

4. That every attempt to banish bribery and corruption, and undue influence, while the present restrictions of the right of suffrage, and imperfect representation in a septennial Parliament shall subsist, would only be calculated to deceive and amuse the nation to its final destruction.

5. That instead of adding to the number of our statutes by regulations incompetent to the purpose proposed, reformation should commence with

with the rescinding and abolishing of the injurious acts and illegal customs above mentioned: thus would the Constitution, as if delivered from an oppressive weight that impedes its exertions, recover its energies; while the principles on which it is founded would suggest a simple, practicable, and effectual plan for regulating those elections, on which our freedom, our happiness, and our very national existence must depend.

Governed by these considerations, the Sub-committee have framed the following plan, in which they have made it their chief effort plainly to express every material provision for securing the free election of an **INDEPENDENT HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT**—they have studiously avoided entering into a detail—they have suggested to the best of their ability a plan, founded upon constitutional principles, and the common rights of mankind—a plan expedient in our present circumstances, and which may with facility be carried into execution by the spirited, yet pacific efforts of the people; provided their breasts are informed with the same sentiments of public virtue, and ardent love of liberty, which have hitherto animated the exertions of the English nation.

Plan for taking the suffrages of the people, at the election of representatives to serve in Parliament.

I. That each county be divided into as many districts as it is intitled to elect representatives, each district chusing one representative.

II. That the division of the county into districts be constituted in such a manner, that each district contain nearly an equal number of males competent to vote in elections; regard being had, as much as may be, to the parochial divisions of the kingdom, so that each division comprehend a certain number of parishes: and moreover, that each district receive its denomination from the parish containing the greatest number of electors.

III. That the election of representatives to serve in Parliament be **HELD ANNUALLY** through England and Wales, upon the first Tuesday in July: that the election commence between the hours of eight and eleven, and be finally closed before sun-set of the same day.

IV. That all the male inhabitants of this country (aliens, minors, criminals, and insane persons excepted) be admitted to vote at the election of representatives, subject only to the forms, provisions, and regulations specified in this report.

V. That the number of representatives, returned by the inhabitants of each county of England and Wales, be settled for the term of seven years next ensuing, according to the following schedule, viz.

That the county of Rutland, and the two Universities, return	}	2—6
each two Representatives		
The counties of Huntingdon and Westmoreland, each three	}	3—6
The county of Bedford, five		
Berkshire, Cumberland, Herefordshire, each six	}	5—5
Bucks, Cambridgeshire with Ely, Hertfordshire, Dorset, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, each seven		
Leicestershire	}	7—42
Suffex, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, each nine		
		8—8
		9—27

Carried over 112
Cheshire,

		Brought over	112
Cheshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Salop, } Staffordshire, each ten			10—60
Hampshire, Wilts, each eleven			11—22
Gloucestershire, thirteen			13—13
Essex, Surry with Southwark, each sixteen			16—32
Lincolnshire, seventeen			17—17
Kent, Lancashire, Somerset, Suffolk, each eighteen			18—72
Durham bishoprick with Northumberland, Devon, each } twenty-one			21—42
Norfolk, twenty-two			22—22
Wales with Monmouth, thirty			30—30
Middlesex with London and Westminster, forty-five			45—45
Yorkshire, forty-six			46—46
		Total	513

VI. That an exact roll be kept of the male inhabitants competent to vote in each parish, continued down to the first Tuesday in June; and that no person be permitted to give his suffrage, whose name is not found in that roll. That this roll be delivered in upon oath of the Clergyman, Churchwardens, or other officers of the parish, to the Churchwardens of that parish of the district where the poll is taken.

VII. That the Sheriff, together with all the Justices of the peace, Mayor, Aldermen, and Magistrates, form in each county a grand inquest, for allotting the districts in due proportion to the male inhabitants competent to vote, and for denominating the same; and that such inquest be finally settled, and notice of the allotment given to each parish comprehended in the district, within the term of ten days after the first Tuesday in June.

VIII. That the election of the representatives of the people be made at the principal town or village of the district.

IX. That the poll of each district be taken by ballot, under the conduct of the churchwardens of the parish in the district where the election is made.

X. The Churchwardens of the district, at the close of the poll, shall declare the name of the person elected, and certify the same to the Sheriff, in order to its being transmitted to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.

XI. That the ANNUAL SESSION of Parliament shall commence upon the first Thursday in November, unless some extraordinary event, or urgent national business, should make it indisputably requisite for the Crown to assemble it before the stated period.

XII. That the Session terminate upon the last day of April, unless the national business should be sooner dispatched; the Crown nevertheless, having the power to prolong the Session beyond the stated period, if any urgent business remain unfinished; in which case, the Parliament may continue its sitting to the first Tuesday in July.

XIII. That all Members of the Commons' House of Parliament, before taking their seats, declare upon oath, That they do not hold any office or emolument at the will of the Crown, or its servants, or any Lord of parliament; that they will give due attendance to business, and act with all fidelity to the people in the discharge of their important trust.

XIV. That all Members serving in Parliament be intitled to reasonable wages, according to the wholesome practice of ancient times.

XV. That all election causes be finally decided by Jury before the Judges of Assize.

XVI. That every person, competent to give his suffrage as an elector, be also esteemed qualified to be elected to serve his country in Parliament.

T. BRAND HOLLIS, Chairman.

YORK.

York Tavern, August 2, 1780

AT a numerous meeting of the Committee of Association, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Whereas, from the late abominable outrages committed by the lowest class of the populace in London, occasion hath been taken, by persons hostile to the just rights and freedom of the People, to defame the Association of this county, and of counties and principal corporations of England, as being calculated to produce similar acts of violence, notwithstanding the express and solemn declaration of their purpose to support, by legal and pacific methods, the propositions for a REFORM in the expenditure of public money, and for a more EQUAL REPRESENTATION, and SHORTER DURATION of PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That from whatever quarter those defamatory suggestions may have come, this Committee doth hold them in contempt, as misrepresentations vainly contrived to intimidate and deter the Associated Bodies from the prosecution of their just and necessary Plan of PUBLIC REFORMATION.

Resolved, That notwithstanding the rejection of every material regulation proposed to Parliament, during the last session, for introducing a more economical management of the public revenues, and effecting a proper diminution of the excessive influence of the Crown, in conformity to the wishes of the People, and to the vote of Parliament itself, on the 6th of April last, this Committee doth confide in the firmness and energy of the Nation, not doubting but their steady perseverance in an orderly and legal support of the measures of their respective Associations, will, in due time, be found effectual to obtain a complete redress of those alarming evils, and also to correct the inveterate abuses in the DURATION and REPRESENTATION OF PARLIAMENT, which are the true origin and source of all our national grievances.

Resolved, That if, on any future unhappy interruption of the public peace, orders shall be issued to the military force to disarm peaceable subjects, being Protestants, under any pretence of example or precedent, drawn from any order given to that effect during the late tumults in London, such orders ought not to be complied with, being contrary to the natural right of self-defence, contrary to the positive law of the land, and directly tending to the utter ruin of our liberties, by the introduction of a military government.

Resolved, that the interference of the military for the suppression of riots, not under the direction of the civil magistrate, but at the discre-

tion

tion of their commanding officer, is a dangerous deviation from the usual and constitutional practices during the reigns of the two first Princes of the house of Hanover, which the most urgent and evident necessity alone can render excusable.

Resolved, That however the order for the interference of the military at their discretion for the suppression of the late riots in the metropolis, may have been unavoidable, from the pressing circumstances of the case, viz. from the greatness of the danger, and the intimidation of the magistracy, from the due execution of their office, in maintaining or restoring the public peace; yet the extension of similar orders to the army in other parts of the kingdom, where no pressing danger actually exists, and where no reluctance in the magistracy to perform their duty can be reasonably suspected, cannot be defended on any real ground of necessity.

Resolved, That it is the dearest interest of every private subject, as well as his bounden duty, by the law of the land, to exert himself according to his utmost ability, to maintain the peace of the country, so that good order may, without the aid or interposition of any military force, be effectually preserved within the same.

Resolved, That this Committee will, at a future meeting, proceed to a nomination of delegates to attend in London next winter, to communicate with the delegates of other Petitioning or Associated Bodies, on the means of carrying into effect the objects of their Petitions or Associations.

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

York Tavern, August 3, 1780.

At the adjourned meeting of the Committee of Association,

Resolved, That, as we do not flatter ourselves that the commission of accounts, appointed by the late Act, promises the Public that effectual redress which it wishes, Mr. BURKE be desired to present again, in the next session of Parliament, his Bill "for the better regulation of his Majesty's civil establishment, and of certain public offices; for the limitation of *pensions*, and the suppressing of sundry *useless, expensive*, and *inconvenient places*, and for applying the monies saved thereby to "the public service;" and that the Chairman be requested to write to Mr. Burke accordingly.

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

The following Letter was sent by Mr. WYVILL, Chairman of the Committee, to the Right Hon. the Earl of EPPINGHAM.

"My Lord,

"By order of the Committee of Association, I have the honor to communicate to your Lordship the vote which admits you a member of their body.

"When the Committee first met to deliberate on a Plan for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, in order to give *security* to our COMMON LIBERTY, they thought it, in the earlier stages of that business, improper to admit members of either House of Parliament, as well

out of delicacy to the members themselves, as from other obvious considerations; but now, when that plan has been maturely digested and settled, such objections no longer subsist, and therefore it is with the greatest pleasure that they admit your Lordship (who has already honored the Association with your signature) to take a part in their deliberations.

"I have the honor to be, &c.

York, Aug. 3.

"C. WYVILL, Chairman."

[A similar letter was sent to Charles Turner, Esq.]

MIDDLESEX COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION.

Free-Masons' Tavern, Dec. 6, 1780.

Resolved unanimously, That the resolutions of the Committee for the county of York (see the preceding page) be adopted, as fully expressive of the sentiments of this Committee.

Y O R K.

York-Tavern, Jan. 1, 1781.

Resolved, that three deputies be appointed to attend in London, to communicate with the delegates of other petitioning or ASSOCIATED bodies, on the means of carrying into effect, the objects of their petitions or associations.

Resolved, That copies of the following instrument of nomination, with instructions to the above-named deputies, be transmitted by the clerk to each deputy.

I N S T R U M E N T

Appointing Deputies with instructions from the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for the county of York, to meet and deliberate with Deputies from other counties, cities, and boroughs, &c. and in concurrence with them, to take the most effectual measures, consistent with law and the constitution, to promote the objects of that Association. Dated at York, January 3, 1781.

The Committee of ASSOCIATION having been empowered by a general meeting of the county of York, held on the 28th of March, 1780, to take such legal and constitutional measures as to them shall appear most expedient for promoting the objects of the ASSOCIATION adopted by that assembly, doth nominate and appoint three gentlemen to be their deputies, with full power, on the 20th day of February next, or as soon after as conveniently may be, to meet in London or Westminster, and to confer with such persons as may attend the proposed meeting of deputies, who shall have received authority for that purpose,

pose, from any county, city, or borough within this kingdom, or from any committee appointed by the same.

You shall concur with the deputies, from other counties, cities, and boroughs, &c. or the majority of them, in any proper application to Parliament, during the continuance of your deputed authority, for correcting the gross abuses in the expenditure of public money, and for reducing the increased and increasing influence of the crown, which ought to be diminished, provided the redress of grievances, proposed as the object of such application, shall be equivalent to the economical REFORM requested by the petition of this county to the last Parliament. And when this important measure for correcting public profusion, and reducing the undue influence of the crown, shall have been taken into consideration, and in some competent degree advanced, you shall also move the deputies aforesaid, to consider the extreme inequality in the Parliamentary representation of this kingdom, and to endeavour, in the present session, by bill, by petition, or by any other adviseable mode of applying to Parliament, to obtain a more adequate representation of the people, by the introduction of at least one hundred additional county members; without which necessary counterpoize to the numerous representatives of venal, hereditary, or otherwise unduly influenced boroughs, no lasting or effectual check can be given to the baneful progress of corruption, now manifestly tending to the ruin of our happy constitution.

And this committee considering according to the principles of the association, that material advantage would more clearly result to the constitution, if the DURATION OF PARLIAMENT WERE SHORTENED, when a more frugal management of the public purse, a reduction of the undue influence of the crown, and a more equal representation of the people have taken place; and not expecting that abuses, profitable to individuals, however injurious to the community, can be corrected without many difficulties and much laborious exertion, will not positively direct you the said deputies to move the concurrence of the other deputies, in a farther application to SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT, TO A TERM NOT EXCEEDING THREE YEARS; but fully confiding in your judgment and fidelity to the public cause, commits to your discretion to determine, according to the actual circumstances which may arise in the course of your conference, whether such motion may be prudent and adviseable, or premature and inconvenient at present, and fit to be postponed to a future session of Parliament; and to act therein accordingly.

And this committee, anxious to guard against every attempt to misrepresent their views of public reformation, by peaceful and legal means, and wishing to obviate imputations injurious to the intended general deputation, by which the just and necessary purpose of that assembly may be defamed and finally defeated, doth hereby most strictly require you the said deputies, to confine your propositions in the general meeting of deputies, to the reform specified in this instrument, or to regulations by plain and necessary connexion immediately dependent upon them.

And this committee doth most expressly require you the said deputies to promote the several objects of public REFORMATION, signified in this instrument, to the best of your judgment, and to the utmost of your power,

power, by orderly means alone, by dutiful application to Parliament, or by such other prudential measures as may be perfectly consistent with law and the constitution.

And if any farther regulations for restoring the constitution shall be suggested by the deputies of any other county or city, &c. this committee not being empowered itself, and therefore unable to empower their deputies to accede to any resolution concerning such new proposal, doth hereby authorise and require two or more of you the said deputies, in such case, to call an extraordinary meeting of this committee, giving a sufficient notice thereof in the public papers, and to report such new proposition to the committee, in order that the propriety of calling a county meeting to consult the general body of freeholders on the subject, may be duly considered.

Lastly, This committee doth resolve, that the authority hereby given to you the said deputies shall cease and determine on the 1st of May, 1781; and doth require, that at the next meeting of the committee, after the expiration of this authority, a report of the proceedings of the general meeting of deputies be laid by you before the committee.

Resolved, That the following address from this committee to the electors of Great Britain, be printed and published as the act of this committee; and that copies thereof, and of the instructions to the deputies, be transmitted to the chairman of the several petitioning and associated bodies in this kingdom.

ADDRESS OF THE COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for the
County of York, to the Electors of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs within the Kingdom of Great Britain, agreed upon at their Meetings, held on the third and fourth instant, at York.

After much dispassionate reflection on the multiplied grievances of our country, on the necessity of some substantial redress, and the most prudent mode of attempting to obtain it, the committee of Yorkshire have appointed the Rev. Christopher Wyvill, Samuel Shore, Esq. and Sir James Norcliffe, Bart. their deputies, with full power to meet and deliberate with deputies from other counties, cities, and boroughs, and in concurrence with them to take the most effectual measures, consistent with law and the constitution, to promote that political reform which the county of York has associated to support.

The committee are perfectly satisfied that such deputation is strictly legal, and consonant with every principle of the constitution. The right to petition Parliament for a redress of grievances, is a fundamental right of the British people; and the exercise of that right, in any mode which is prohibited by no positive statute, cannot be unlawful. Let it be acknowledged, then, that this deputation is an uncommon appointment; uncommon distress has called it forth; and when new dangers arise to public liberty, new modes of defence, adapted to resist the attack, are not only justifiable, but absolutely necessary for its preservation. The truth of this observation will hardly be contested by those, who, understanding the nature and value of civil liberty,

berty, have the spirit to support it, by a strenuous exertion of their legal powers. But it may be expected that much misrepresentation and artful suggestions will be employed by the obstructors of REFORMATION, to calumniate the committee, and by exciting groundless apprehensions of innovation, and hazardous opposition to government, to alienate the great body of independent electors from the public cause. It is not only thought expedient, therefore, to submit to general inspection the instructions of the committee, to their deputies; but also to state, in a full and explicit manner, their views of public REFORMATION, and the motives of their political conduct for promoting that important work. Whether their interposition for that purpose be proper or seasonable; whether the means of redress they have proposed be practicable and prudent; whether the end itself be just and necessary; these are questions in which they feel themselves too deeply concerned to pronounce their opinion. To the judgment of their countrymen they appeal; to the decision of men of candour, moderation, and upright intentions; to the public they cheerfully submit their conduct; with such men they sincerely wish to co-operate; and from their approbation and concurrence they derive their only hope, that the progress of corruption may yet be checked by pacific means, and the Parliament of this country may be restored in some degree to the purity of its original institution.

During the reigns of the four Princes of the House of Stuart, frequent attempts were made, by those weak but ambitious Monarchs, to overturn the constitution, to abolish Parliaments, and to assume by force an unlimited and despotic authority. Succeeding Princes, warned by the repeated miscarriages and final ruin of that family, at the Revolution, seem to have adopted a milder but not less dangerous mode of attack. From that period, instead of violent usurpation, and declared hostility to Parliaments, it has been the prevailing policy of Government to employ the arts of seduction, and by creating a corrupt dependance in those assemblies, virtually to emancipate the Crown from all controul. For almost a century, corruption, with few exceptions, and short, very short interruptions, has been the avowed principle of our Government. The tendency of this fatal system has long been seen and deplored by the wise and virtuous part of the community. But while the restoration of the Stuart line was an event within any degree of probability, the return of undisguised despotism was the immediate danger, against which the growing influence of the Crown was unwarily cherished as the only adequate defence. In later times, in the full flow of national pride and prosperity, to stem the torrent of corruption, had been a vain and unprofitable attempt.

But now, by the unspeakable infatuation of our councils, the scene of national glory is changed; with much of our foreign trade our naval superiority is lost; our American provinces are dismembered from the empire; and our ancient foes, aided by our once friendly ally, and encouraged by almost every other European power, are proudly insulting over this wretched country. At home, agriculture and manufactures decline, as the load of taxes and our public debts increase; the national substance is wasting fast away by the profusion of expence in this rash and unfortunate war; and the influence of the Crown fed by that very prodigality, and increased in full proportion to it, is now swollen to a most alarming magnitude. The system of corruption has reached to its maturity;

maturity; and the crisis of our country is at length arrived. The amputation of that poisonous tumour, the excrescence of our vitiated constitution, must, therefore, be resolved on, or political dissolution must soon be the unavoidable consequence.

With an alternative like this before them, the choice of freemen is soon determined. The committee, therefore, took an early and active part in support of that petition, to the House of Commons, which was agreed to at a general meeting of the county of York, on the 30th of December, 1779, and which was soon after presented to that House. With great satisfaction they observed the singular unanimity of so many counties and corporate towns, who honoured this county with their concurrence in that measure, supporting their proposition for an æconomical reform, and adopting, not unfrequently, the language of their petition. The satisfaction of the committee arose not from a fond parental partiality for their own production, but from the just hope that concurrence seemed to afford, that so temperate a reform, requested by the general voice of the people, would not be solicited in vain from the representative assembly. But in these expectations, however apparently reasonable, they have been miserably disappointed. The inadequate relief in the mode of collecting the public revenues, with some official regulations, which possibly may be obtained hereafter, by the dilatory operation of a commission of accounts, is not that reform which the people asked, and had a right to expect. The memorable but ineffectual vote, that the influence of the crown ought to be diminished, only served to cover that venal assembly with eternal shame. For not one specific proposition for diminishing the enormous influence of the crown has been granted; not one exorbitant emolument of office has been reduced; not one sinecure place has been abolished; nor a single pension unmerited by public service struck off the list. Even the motion of the excellent representative of Yorkshire, for the production of that list, was negatived by a corrupt majority.

The committee may be shocked, but they are not discouraged, by those evident proofs of the prostitution of that assembly. On the contrary, they are more fully convinced, that the abuses of Parliament itself are become the principal object of public REFORMATION. Among these the inequality in the representation of the people may justly be pointed out as the fundamental abuse.

The balance of our constitution had been wisely placed by our forefathers in the hands of the counties and principal cities and towns; but by the caprice and partiality of our kings, from Henry VI. down to Charles II. it was gradually withdrawn from them, and by the addition of two hundred parliamentary burgesses, was wholly invested in the inferior boroughs. From that latter period, the mischiefs of this irregular exercise of royal authority have been farther increased by the silent operation of time. Many unrepresented towns have risen into population, wealth, and consequence, in the kingdom; many boroughs have sunk into indigence, or have even totally disappeared, without a trace of their existence left behind them, except the privilege of nominal representation. In these decayed boroughs, the Crown and a few great families notoriously nominate representatives, who form a clear majority of the House of Commons. In that majority a liberal minister will ever find a ready support, however ruinous the measures of his administration may be to the liberty and the general interest of his country. The members who represent the great masses of landed and commercial property, shall plead in vain for their constituents,

In the scale of parliamentary computation, an inconsiderable village will balance a county; and a short list of hamlets, where hardly a vestige of population is to be found, will decide against the general sense and wishes of the public. A parliament elected in any reasonable proportion, would duly represent the sense, and act for the interest of the whole community; but from a Senate thus unequally arranged, no penal laws, no external regulations can exclude corruption; because in situations of no controul, partial advantage will still outweigh the public good. In royal innovation, this gross abuse in the representation of the people chiefly originates. From parliamentary authority, a proper counterpoize to these dependent boroughs must be restored to the counties and principal cities, &c. before that assembly can become once more a firm and incorruptible guardian of the public weal.

The SEPTENNIAL DURATION of Parliaments is another manifest abuse which calls aloud for reformation. The statute enacting that regulation was not only a contradiction to the genius of our constitution, it was a direct infringement of the triennial law, under whose authority that House of Commons then sat, and had been elected. It was an irregular assumption of power, which the alledged necessity of the times could hardly excuse; it was professed to be a temporary expedient, to guard against the cabals of the banished family, and it was reluctantly submitted to on that single account. But since the pretensions of that family to the throne have been universally exploded, the repeal of the septennial act is a matter of justice which state policy no longer forbids, and which the people have the clearest right to demand. SHORT PARLIAMENTS are their ancient, indubitable right; they are also necessary for re-establishing that dependence of the representative assembly on the constituent body which it is the peculiar aim and advantage of our happy constitution to maintain. A more equal representation would restore the balance of our government to the bulk of the electors; a SHORTER DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS, by returning members more frequently, to be approved or rejected by their constituents, as their parliamentary conduct might deserve, would ever secure the fidelity and vigilance of the representative assembly. By a temperate REFORM of Parliament on these principles, the system of corruption might be effectually excluded, and the enjoyment of our liberties might be transmitted to the latest posterity.

Impressed with these sentiments, the Committee of Yorkshire are not disposed to relax in their pacific efforts to restore the constitution, because the last House of Commons thought fit to reject the most material parts of the æconomical petition. The necessity for concerting proper measures to support that petition, and also to obtain a reform in the principal parliamentary abuses, only appears more evidently demonstrable. For if the great constituent body requested that House in vain to correct gross and undeniable abuses; if the alarm at the rapid increase of the influence of the Crown, was at once admitted to be just and well founded, and yet every measure for the diminution of it was rejected with contempt, that House justly forfeited the public confidence. In that House, it is plain our domestic complaints have their foundation, and without a reformation of fundamental abuses there, the interposition of the people will be worse than nugatory. Declarations of the public sense, in a regular way, are the ultimate check of the constitution on a corrupt Parliament, or a tyrannical Administration. But it had been better and wiser far if the people, patiently crouching

under the pressure of their burdens, had never solicited redress, than if, after the unjust rejection of their request, they should tamely surrender their rights, and sink a once into abject acquiescence. The people ought not to interpose on trivial or light occasions, but when great and enormous abuses call forth their exertions, they ought not to interpose in vain.

It is necessary then, that the collective sense of the public should be supported by the most efficacious measures which can be devised, consistent with a strict obedience to the regulations of the law. For the system of corruption is an establishment of wide extent; and the retainers of that establishment form a numerous and well-compacted band, determined to maintain every profitable abuse with united strength. In opposition to that mercenary phalanx, the efforts of a few solitary individuals, or even a few unconnected cities and counties, would be too unequal to succeed. From the joint endeavours of the public a political deliverance can only be expected. For this purpose general assemblies of the people, frequently repeated, seem to be too operose a mode; to give due efficacy to the popular interposition, a more compendious method of proceeding seems to be advisable; by which the friends of reformation may be enabled to act with facility and vigor, and yet with the full weight and authority of the whole collective body.

Whether associations in the several districts of the kingdom, acting by their respective committees, and by general deputation from the associated bodies, be the most advantageous mode of collecting and supporting the sense of the public, the committee of Yorkshire are conscious, it is not their part to decide, but it is a feasible mode; it is a mode conformable to law; and by this mode they trust, the united efforts of independent men, throughout the kingdom, will be crowned with final and complete success.

The measures which the committee wish to recommend, as the objects of this general deputation, are,

1. The presentment of a petition to the new Parliament, equivalent in its prayer to the petition of the county of York.

2. The application to Parliament in such modes, and at such times as may be approved by the majority of deputies, for obtaining at least one hundred additional county members, **AND FOR SHORTENING THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS TO A TERM NOT EXCEEDING THREE YEARS.**

If the committee had confined their deputies to support the economical petition, without attempting to obtain any correction of parliamentary abuses, it is plain their scheme of reformation would have been a defective scheme, and in the present circumstances would not have deserved the national support. On the other hand, if they had extended their plan of reformation to the utmost stretch which theory can warrant, they might have proposed an efficacious reform indeed, but it would not have been attainable. To the zealous advocates for ANNUAL Parliaments, and the perfect equality of representation, they are most ready to concede, that those propositions may be supported by the ancient practice of the constitution, and the genuine theory of civil liberty. But when this country is in manifest danger of sinking under that despotic authority, which now tramples on almost every other European state, it behoves the friends of the constitution not to hazard the

the total loss of liberty, by aiming at theoretical, but unattainable perfection. In given circumstances, that is the most eligible plan of improvement, which is the best that can be attained. With the metropolis and many counties, these considerations seem to have had their full weight; and by the generous assistance, with the concurrence of those respectable counties, &c. which have already supported the Economical Petition, there is every reason to expect that constitutional improvements may be obtained, which approach as nearly to a perfect system of *Reform* as the temper and actual circumstances of the nation would allow.

Some excellent persons, to whom the proposed Plan of *Reformation* appears unexceptionably proper, have yet objected to the proposition at this time. Their concurrence would have been, and still would be, received with high respect and gratitude. But in the present situation of distress, the Committee are clearly convinced, that procrastination and indecision would not be consistent with true political prudence. For when can the correction of abuses be proposed with such propriety, or so much probability of success, as when their mischievous consequences are most severely felt? What can induce a *corrupt Parliament* to abolish *corruption*? Not the weight of reason; not the force of shame; but the **AUTHORITY OF THE PUBLIC** alone. But the same general concurrence of the People, which can reform the corrupt expenditure of public money, with equal ease can correct those Parliamentary defects, whence that corruption originates.—There lies the root of our domestic evils; and it is the duty of the Committee to point it out, and to admonish their fellow-citizens, that **NOTHING SHORT OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION DESERVES THEIR INTERPOSITION.**

Since the defection of Pulteney from the Public Cause, the professions of political men have been held in extreme distrust. Disinterested men have looked with unconcern on the struggles of contending parties; and, it must be owned, contending parties have too generally deserved it. The individuals who form the splendid exception are few; and they have not been able much to diminish the popular distrust. Hence the long and unavailing struggle of public men, unsupported by national confidence; hence the reluctance of unambitious men to embark on any other bottom than that stipulated reform of parliamentary abuses.

The distress of their country has at last induced such men to make the virtuous attempt. Uninfluenced by personal regard, or partial considerations; animated with an honest zeal for the welfare of the community, they have quitted their private, but independent stations, to prosecute a full redress of the *national grievances*; but if a disposition should appear to confine their generous undertaking to the regulation of a few official abuses, of secondary importance in the scale of public affairs, it is impossible to preserve the support of such men on these conditions, nor on those conditions would this Committee wish to preserve it.

The General Good, therefore, seems to require, that the correction of those Abuses in Parliament, which are the foundation of our domestic calamities, be now proposed to the Public, as the proper and principal object of their united endeavors.

Having thus freely stated to their countrymen their views of *reformation*, and the motives of their public conduct, the Committee trust

that the other counties, cities, and boroughs, who concur in these political sentiments, in whole or in part, will co-operate with the intended **GENERAL DEPUTATION**, by appointing **Deputies**, with power to support in that Assembly, such of these *propositions of reform* as they may respectively approve.

By a long train of fatal misconduct, the wealthy grandeur, the super-eminent power of this empire are, perhaps, irrecoverably lost. But in the general wreck which threatens the fortunes of the Public, their vigorous and timely interposition may yet preserve the Liberty and the Constitution of Britain.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, for drawing up the foregoing address.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to David Hartley, Esq. for his unwearied and disinterested services in the *Public Cause*; and also their particular acknowledgements for his address to this Committee, dated this day.

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

York Tavern, Jan. 4, 1781.

At the adjourned Meeting of the Committee of Association,

The Rev. Mr. Wyvill in the Chair,

Resolved, That David Hartley, Esq. be requested to permit this Committee to publish his excellent address to them, dated Jan. 3, 1781.

Resolved, That if Mr. Hartley shall give his permission to this Committee to publish his address, copies thereof be immediately transmitted, with their recommendation, to the other Petitioning and Associated Bodies throughout the kingdom.

HUNTINGDON.

At a General Meeting of the Huntingdonshire Committee of Association, held at Buckden, on Tuesday, December 26, 1780, the resolutions of the county of York (see page 68) were proposed, and unanimously agreed to,

R. BERNARD, Chairman.

At the adjourned General Meeting of the Huntingdonshire Committee of Association, held at Buckden, on the 11th day of January, 1781,

Resolved, That it be recommended to every housekeeper to have proper **ARMS**, such as **MUSQUET** and **BAYONET**, and to be ready and expert in the use of them; to be prepared against all emergencies that may arise from any attack of our many surrounding enemies, or any invasion of our Rights and Liberties.

Resolved, That three Deputies be appointed to attend in London or Westminster, to communicate with the Delegates of other Petitioning

ing or Associated Bodies on the means of carrying into effect the objects of their Petitions or Associations.

R. BERNARD, Chairman.

DEVON.

At a Meeting of the Committee of the county of Devon, held pursuant to adjournment at the Castle of Devon, on Tuesday Jan. 9, 1781.

THIS committee, appointed by a general county meeting, held the 28th day of January, 1780, for supporting the objects of their petition, presented to Parliament, (praying that effectual measures might be taken to enquire into and correct the gross abuses in the raising and expenditure of public money, and to restrain the enormous and unconstitutional influence of the Crown, arising from the grant of sinecure places, exorbitant emoluments of office, and pensions unmerited by public service) think it now incumbent on them to proceed to make the following declarations :

First, It is with the utmost regret that this committee finds itself under the necessity of declaring, that hitherto nothing hath been done by Parliament towards effecting the ends desired by the petition of this, as well as of several other counties, of England, notwithstanding the late House of Commons did, by a resolution of theirs, made on the 6th of April last, and by several other resolutions, acknowledge the justness of the prayers of the said petitions, and the competency, as well as the duty of Parliament, immediately to proceed to a reform of the abuses and grievances complained of. Yet, instead of proceeding to that reform, the very influence complained of, was exerted either to reject in the first instance, or to baffle in its progress, every proposition that was offered to the consideration of Parliament, for effecting the ends proposed.

Secondly, This committee think they cannot, in justice to their fellow-subjects, help declaring their apprehensions at the precedent established for a new and dangerous accession of power to the Crown, in taking occasion from the late riots in London, and Westminster (arising from other causes, and from the supposed inactivity of the magistrates of the metropolis) to establish a military power, independent of the civil authority, under the colour of preserving the peace, which power was at the same time exerted far beyond the period of time, or the local circumstances to which it was pretended to be applied, while every artifice has been made use of to confound and misrepresent the peaceable proceedings of those who wished to redress the constitutional grievances of the people, expressed by their petitions, as tending to promote sedition, and encourage public disturbances.

Thirdly, This committee think it necessary to declare their concern at finding, that in addition to these unconstitutional and internal evils, this nation is sinking under the increase of public burthens, occasioned by a fatal system of policy, whereby it hath been gradually involved in a war with almost half the powers of Europe, not without apprehension of still further disputes with other powers, whilst the influence of the Crown, instead of being the least diminished, receives an additional weight

weight from the very increase of the national expences, and the distribution of the public money, without the least hope being afforded to the people of a more economical reform or reduction of those expences.

From all these circumstances and considerations, this committee think it their duty to come to the following resolutions :

First. Resolved, That this committee will most unremittingly persevere in its endeavours to obtain the ends proposed by the petition of this and several other counties of England, and in the discharge of their duty, in pursuance of the trust and power reposed in them by this county.

Secondly. Resolved, That this committee does seriously exhort and recommend it to the representatives of this county, that they will not omit any opportunity of obtaining a redress of the several grievances intended to be remedied, which redress this committee think will best be obtained by that excellent plan of reform, so well imagined, and so well digested by Mr. Burke, in his bill brought into Parliament for that purpose, a plan which does honour to his abilities and integrity; and also by the bill for restraining revenue officers from voting at elections of Members of Parliament, as well as by the bill for disabling contractors to sit in Parliament; and by the several other measures proposed, in pursuance of the late petitions (all of which, in the opinion of this committee, tended towards a reformation of expences, and a diminution of the influence of the Crown;) and that they do unite and concur with other Members of Parliament, in support of these or any other propositions, which shall tend towards the same end.

Thirdly. Resolved, That as all public burthens must either mediately or immediately affect the property of the people; and as it hath ever been their undoubted privilege to grant or withhold supplies, so it is their legal and constitutional right to assemble peaceably for the purpose of instructing their representatives, considering the exigencies of the times, and for petitioning for a redress of grievances.

Fourthly. Resolved, That notwithstanding the rejection of every material regulation, proposed to Parliament during the last session, this committee doth confide in the firmness and energy of the nation, not doubting but their steady perseverance in, and orderly and legal support of the measures of their respective petitions, will in due time be found effectual, to obtain a compleat redress of those alarming evils of which they complain.

Fifthly. Resolved, That this committee looks with equal indignation and contempt on those calamities, which tend to confound the legal and peaceable assemblies of English people, with the outrages of a frantic populace, as misrepresentations vainly contrived to intimidate the associated bodies from the prosecution of their just and necessary plan of reformation.

Sixthly. Resolved, That however the order for the interference of the military at their discretion for the suppression of the late riots in the metropolis, may have been unavoidable, from the pressing circumstances of the case, viz. from the greatness of the danger, the intimidation of the magistracy, from the due execution of their office, in maintaining or restoring public peace; yet the extension and continuance of similar orders to the army throughout all England, without the appearance of disorder existing, is an usurpation of power, which, while it insults the Constitution, excites the most alarming fears in the breast of all its friends.

friends." And that it be recommended to the representatives of this county to promote an enquiry in Parliament, by whose advice the order of the 7th of June was issued for the military to act without waiting the directions from the civil magistrate, and for what time, and by whose advice it was continued.

Seventhly. Resolved, That this Committee feel with the deepest concern the situation to which this once flourishing empire is now reduced, and which they think arises from such a series of errors in policy, and neglect of government, as will admit of few examples; nor can they look forward with any pleasing hope that a restoration to our former dignity or consequence is likely to take place till a different line of conduct, both as to measures and principles, is adopted, from that which has brought us into those difficulties in which we are now involved.

Eighthly. Resolved, That this Committee (thinking that there never was a time when union among all well-wishers to their country was more necessary than at present) is desirous of uniting with the other Counties and Committees of England for the purpose of effecting a *constitutional reform* in the several matters and grievances complained of, and is ready to concert with them the most likely means to obtain this unanimity, and to extricate the nation out of its present difficulties. For which purpose, this Committee does hereby appoint and nominate the Hon. Mr. Fortescue, Sir George Yonge, Bart. John Dunning, John Chichester, John Short, James Hamlyn, and Walter Ratcliffe, Esqrs, or any three of them, to act as Deputies from this Committee, to meet and confer with the Deputies of other counties, exhorting them to concert and support such measures as may awaken the present Parliament to a serious attention to the concerns of the Public, and to the desired *reform*, together with such other reformation in the *duration and mode of representation* in Parliament, as shall prove necessary to secure the lasting enjoyment of such benefits as may be derived from their united endeavors to the Constitution and People of England.

REPORT of PROCEEDINGS at a GENERAL MEETING of DEPUTIES from the Associated Counties, &c. held in London in the months of March and April last: submitted by the Rev. Christopher Wywill, Samuel Shore, Esq. and Sir James Norcliffe, Bart. to the COMMITTEE of ASSOCIATION for the county of YORK, on the 9th day of May, 1781.

A previous meeting of several Deputies having been obtained at the St. Alban's Tavern, on the 24th of February, 1781, to consider the proper time and place for opening the GENERAL DEPUTATION, it was unanimously resolved, to hold the First GENERAL MEETING OF DEPUTIES on the 3d of March ensuing; and the Common Council of the city of London having in the mean time come to a resolution to allow the New Common Council Chamber in Guildhall to the Deputies, the First General Meeting was accordingly held in the said Chamber in Guildhall, on March 3, 1781.

At

At the first Meeting of the General Deputation, it was resolved,

That application should be made to Parliament during the present session, for correcting the gross abuses in the expenditure of the public money, and for reducing the increased and increasing influence of the Crown, which ought to be diminished.

At the adjourned Meeting on March 10, it was resolved,

That a Committee should be appointed to form and report to the Meeting on the 17th of March, a Petition equivalent in its prayer to the several Petitions of the People presented to the House of Commons in the last session of Parliament; and the Rev. C. Wyvill (Chairman of the Meeting), Lord Viscount Mahon, and Mr. Fox (among others), were chosen of the Committee accordingly.

On the 17th of March the Meeting of Deputies was transferred from the Guildhall to the St. Alban's Tavern, the Corporation of London having thought fit to retract their courtesy to the Deputies, to rescind the offer of their room at Guildhall, and to abolish their Committee of Association. On that day, the Deputies from the Associated Counties and the city of Westminster, received the following Petition, reported by their Committee.

" To the honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled,

" The humble Petition of the several persons whose names are hereunto subscribed, Freeholders of the respective counties of York, Surry, Hertford, Huntingdon, Middlesex, Essex, Kent, Devon, and Nottingham, and Electors of the city of Westminster,

" Sheweth,

" That this nation hath been engaged for several years in a most expensive and unfortunate war. That many of our valuable colonies have actually declared themselves independent, have formed a strict confederacy with the ancient enemies of Great Britain; and the consequences of these combined misfortunes have been a large addition to the national debt, a heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactures, and land-rents of the kingdom.

" That notwithstanding this calamitous and impoverished state of the nation, much public money has been improvidently squandered, and that many individuals enjoy sinecure places, efficient places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service, to a large and still increasing amount; whence the Crown has acquired a great and unconstitutional influence, which, if not checked, may soon prove fatal to the Liberties of this Country.

" And your Petitioners further shew, that your Petitioners, jointly with other Freeholders of several counties, and electors of several cities and towns in this kingdom, did, in the last session of the late Parliament, present to the honorable House of Commons humble Petitions, requesting that some remedy might be provided by the wisdom of Parliament, against the extensive and unconstitutional influence of the Crown,

Crown, and some stop might be put to the lavish expenditure of public money.

"And your Petitioners beg leave to state, that the matter contained in the Petitions so presented by your Petitioners and others, was taken into consideration by the honorable House, and on due and mature deliberation that House resolved,

1st. "That it is necessary to declare, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.

2d. "That it is competent to this House to examine into and correct abuses in the expenditure of the civil-list revenues, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall appear expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do.

3d. "That it is the duty of this House to provide, as far as may be, an immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the Petitions presented to this House from the different counties, cities, and towns in this kingdom.

"And your Petitioners beg leave further to state, that before that honorable House had effected that diminution of the influence of the Crown, and provided an effectual redress of the grievances complained of in the said Petitions, the said Parliament of Great Britain was, by his Majesty's Royal Proclamation, dissolved.

"Your Petitioners, therefore, on behalf of themselves and others, their fellow-subjects, who joined with your Petitioners in the said Petitions, appealing to the justice of this honorable House, do most earnestly request, both for the relief of the subject and the safety of the Constitution, that this honorable House will proceed to enquire by what means that diminution of the influence of the Crown may be obtained, which the last House of Commons declared to be necessary, and that this honorable House will proceed to examine into all the branches of the expenditure of the public money; and also to enquire what expences can be retrenched by an abolition of sinecure and unnecessary places, by a reformation in respect of pensions unmerited by public services, and by a reduction of the exorbitant emoluments of office, and that the produce be appropriated to the necessities of the state, in such manner as to the wisdom of Parliament shall seem meet.

"And your Petitioners shall ever pray," &c.

And it was unanimously resolved,

That the Petition be approved by the Meeting, and that the Chairman, Sir F. Vincent, and Sir R. Smyth, be deputed to wait on Sir Geo. Savile, to request him to present the Petition to the House of Commons, and also to wait on Mr. Dunning, and to request him to second Sir George Savile; with which request those faithful Friends of the People most readily promised to comply. To preserve union in the GENERAL DEPUTATION, and to secure the reception of the Petition by the House of Commons, it was thought expedient that the Petition should be signed by the several Deputies as Freeholders of their respective counties, &c. who did not in that instance expressly assume the character of Deputies.

The laborious and hazardous attendance of Sir George Saville in a very infirm state of health, to move Parliament, to enquire into the late extraordinary loan, unfortunately disabled him to give his promised assistance, without a delay, which would have had the worst effects. On this account, his excellent colleague, Mr. H. Duncombe, seconded by Mr. Dunning, presented the petition to the House of Commons, on the 2d of April. It was at that time laid upon the table of the House for future consideration; and since the meeting of Parliament after the Easter recess, notice has been given by Sir George Saville, that on the 8th of May, he would move the House to refer the petition to a Committee, in order that proper measures might be pursued to give that redress to the *People*, which their great and acknowledged GRIEVANCES so loudly demand.

On the 24th of March it was resolved by the GENERAL DEPUTATION, That the addition of at least one hundred Members to the House of Commons, to be chosen in a due proportion in the different counties in the kingdom of Great Britain, would be a measure tending strongly to correct the gross inadequacy in the representation of Parliament, and the extensive public evils resulting from it.

On the 7th of April it was resolved, That when by the peaceful and legal efforts of the people, a more frugal management of the public purse, and a more adequate representation in Parliament shall have been obtained, the repeal of the septennial bill would form a strong barrier against the inroads of Parliamentary corruption, and the alarming influence of the Crown.

Your deputies had thus obtained the concurrence of the General Meeting in resolutions equivalent to the propositions for a Parliamentary REFORM adopted by the county of York; but they were not encouraged to recommend an application to Parliament, on the ground of the propositions. For notwithstanding the approbation of some of the best and wisest men of this country, a disposition favourable to this plan of PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION did not sufficiently appear in the great body of the Nobles, or in the House of Representatives; and the General Deputation was not supported by the declared sense of the people, with sufficient vigor to bring on the momentous business of a REFORM OF PARLIAMENT. To all our most experienced friends it seemed advisable to postpone that arduous task to a more favorable, but they trust, not a very distant season. Your Deputies therefore ventured in this instance to depart from your instructions, trusting that the circumstances of the case, will in your opinion be their justification.

A resolution to dissolve the General Deputation was agreed to by the Meeting, on the 21st of April.

Your Deputies have it not in their power to report to this Committee, the event of the petition to the House of Commons; as their decision on that measure is not yet known. Possibly the result may be favourable to your hopes; but on the supposition, that no immediate redress of grievances will be obtained in consequence of the Deputies petition, what (it may be asked) is the advantage to the public, derived from this measure of a GENERAL DEPUTATION? To this question your Deputies trust a satisfactory answer may be given. It is not their province to pronounce whence the present dejection of the nation proceeds, but whether it arise from the widely-extended operation of corruption, or from the fear and apprehension which the enormous power
of

of the Crown hath impressed upon the People, or from other causes blended and combined with these; it is fortunate surely that those causes have not produced universal despondence. In this discouraging situation of our country, men have been found in every part of the kingdom, whom neither corruption could seduce, nor the frown of power could terrify: who have not ceased to point out to their fellow-subjects the impending danger, and with a manly firmness to reprobate a venal system of Government. While independent men, supported by large bodies of their fellow-citizens, have the virtue thus to resist corruption, the antient English vigour has not abandoned this nation; the hope of a radical reformation, cannot be ill-founded; their honest example, cannot fail to animate the timorous, to awe the corrupt, and gradually to RESTORE THE GENUINE LOVE OF LIBERTY, AND THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION.

Your Deputies therefore, notwithstanding the present unfavorable aspect of public affairs, do most earnestly exhort and conjure this Committee, not to despair of the common weal. No;—let us proceed with unabated fortitude;—let us call on our dispirited countrymen with unwearied perseverance;—let us warn them with faithful zeal to UNITE IN DEFENCE OF THEIR COMMON RIGHTS, against the overbearing influence of the Crown, and the progress of general venality. The means to be employed to check that profligate system are peaceful, orderly, and legal; the end itself is just and necessary, and by a firm and timely UNION OF THE PEOPLE, certainly not unattainable. The necessity of that union on the solid grounds of a Parliamentary reformation, will become still more apparent; the public confidence will follow and support the exertions of disinterested men; the sense of danger, and the growing distresses of the nation, will rouse the indolent, and the inconsiderate; and finally unite in the *public cause*, every class and description of our independent fellow subjects, not totally lost to every feeling of integrity and public spirit.

C. WYVILL,
SAMUEL SHORE,
JAMES NORCLIFFE.

York Tavern, May 9, 1781.

At a Meeting of the Committee of Association, the following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Rev. Chr. Wyvill, Samuel Shore, Esq. and Sir James Norcliffe, Bart. for their diligent attendance on the business of their delegation, and for their able support of the measures they were deputed to promote; and that this Committee highly approve of their conduct.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be given to Sir George Savile, Bart. Mr. Duncombe, and Mr. Dunning, for their ready attention and support to the petitions of this and other counties, cities, and places for reforming the waste of public money, and reducing the increased and increasing influence of the Crown, which ought to be diminished; and that the Chairman be desired to communicate these thanks.

Resolved, That this Committee think it highly expedient and most earnestly recommend it to their fellow-subjects, to persevere, without

remission, in the pursuit of the objects of this ASSOCIATION, and not to doubt but that measures guided by a temperate, though steady resolution, and founded on the reasonableness and necessity of the reformation aimed at, must in the end be crowned with success.

Resolved, That this day's report of the Delegates be printed and published, and that the Chairman be desired to transmit copies thereof to the different Committees of petitioning or associated counties and places.

"C. WYVILL, Chairman."

York-Tavern, May 19, 1781.

At the adjourned Meeting of the Committee of Association, held at the York Tavern, in York, on the 10th instant,

It was resolved unanimously, That the Chairman be requested to write a letter to Sir George Savile, to acquaint him that the Committee having been informed of the very precarious state of health in which he thought it his duty to attend Parliament, for the sake of opposing the late scandalously extravagant loan, desire to express their grateful sense of his zeal for the honor and interest of his country; but to assure him at the same time, that however sorry they should have been if a contract so usurious in itself, and so calculated to promote the *corrupt system* long complained of, had passed without attracting the notice, and exciting the indignation of every friend to the English Constitution, nevertheless they should think their country poorly recompensed indeed, if even success in opposition to that ruinous measure had been obtained at the expence of a life so important to the public.

"C. WYVILL, Chairman."

The following letters passed between the Committee of Association to Sir G. SAVILLE and Mr. DUNCOMBE, respecting the resolution of Thanks unanimously voted at the last meeting of the Committee, for the distinguished support which those gentlemen have given to the popular cause in the present session of Parliament.

To Sir GEORGE SAVILLE, Bart.

Burton-Hall, May 12, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is with the highest satisfaction I obey the directions of the Committee of Association for the county of York, by transmitting to you the inclosed copy of two Resolutions of Thanks for your late great and meritorious exertions in the *public service*, which that Committee unanimously voted on the 9th and 10th of May, 1781.—If language, more strongly expressive of gratitude and perfect confidence, had occurred to the Committee, it would have corresponded better with their sentiments, and certainly would have been adopted on this occasion. I am, Dear Sir,

"With the highest esteem and regard, your most obedient servant,

"C. WYVILL."

To

To the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, Chairman of the Committee for the County of York.

London, May, 18, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"I received the night before last your very kind letters, one of them inclosing two resolutions of the Committee of the 9th and 10th instant. I do not know how I have it in my power better (if indeed at all) to express the sense I have of the honour done me by those Resolutions, than by assuring you of the lively gratitude with which I receive such tokens of the favor of my constituents.

"However conscious I am that their kindness has much over-rated my title to thanks or to praise, one part of the reward I hope to hold fast, because it depends upon my will, and not my ability to serve those who sent me—I mean their confidence; if I have earned that, I have well spent my time, and well directed my endeavours, at least to my own private account and feelings, however miserable and poor the success be which has attended these endeavours to the public.

"The subject of the second Resolution, regarding what is so truly styled the *scandalously extravagant loan*, may possibly lead some men to judge, in part, even of the cause of that want of success; but the House of Commons having itself declined to enter into any investigation of an affair in which its own purity was so nearly concerned, and so openly arraigned, it becomes a simple individual only to mention, (what indeed every news-paper will tell) that the Minister's bargain was selling at the market at the rate of above a million advanced price, at the very moment that the House of Commons, so concerned and so arraigned, was confirming the contract.

"Without making further comment on this transaction, I mean just to state why it was that this particular business seemed to me to call more pressingly, than almost any other, for public examination. The earnestness I gave way to on that occasion, was, in truth, attended with fatigue and inconvenience, rather than any degree of risk; and in that respect I am persuaded, could we have succeeded, we should have so far smoothed the way to other detections and reforms, that our future labours would, on the whole, have been less, as well as more pleasant. Of these detections and these reforms, I do not, I confess, see the least present prospect. In future and *corrupt parliaments*, the greater the public calamities, the better loan, and the better premium it will require to procure them to be voted blessings; and *corruption and extravagance* will very naturally keep pace with *public poverty and wretchedness*.

"I meant only to have troubled you with my grateful thanks, and to have begged you to take the earliest and most proper method of conveying them to the Gentlemen of the Committee, but I found it almost impossible not to advert somewhat particularly to a subject, which, by the second Resolution, seems to have struck the Committee, as well worthy their attention.

"I cannot help adding my best acknowledgments to you, for your obliging attention and kindness to me, and am,

"Dear Sir, with great regard, your most obedient and obliged humble servant,

G. SAVILE."

To

To H. DUNCOMBE, Esq.

Burton-Hall, May, 14, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is with the highest satisfaction I obey the directions of the Committee of Association for the county of York, by transmitting to you the inclosed copy of a Resolution of Thanks, unanimously voted by that Committee on the 9th of May, 1781, for your distinguished exertions in support of the Petition to Parliament by the late General Meeting of Deputies.

"The gratitude of the People is sure to follow the fidelity of their representative; it is a debt, Sir, which a very considerable body of your constituents with pleasure pay to you; but at the same time they cannot but lament the infelicity of these times, when their just commendation of an honest and independent Member of Parliament is an implied censure of Parliament itself.

"I am, dear Sir, with the greatest esteem and regard, your most faithful and obedient servant,

"C. WYVILL."

To the Rev. Mr. WYVILL.

London, May 19, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"I received last night your very obliging letter, containing the thanks of the Committee, and must own I learn with extreme satisfaction, that my conduct in Parliament has in any degree deserved the approbation, or justified the confidence of my Constituents.

"The event of the Petition of the Deputies was not indeed favourable to our wishes, but I still anticipate the prospect of a *radical reformation of public abuses*, yet I am persuaded attainable only by the DETERMINED EFFORTS AND LEGAL UNION of honest and independent men. The principles of the Committee, which I have ever avowed, and am proud to avow, have been amply confirmed to me in the course of one Session, by my observations on the conduct of public affairs; and I am more than ever convinced, that the only hopes of *security to our liberties, and redress of our grievances*, are to be derived from the integrity of Parliaments, and a JUSTER REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE.

"You will please to make my most respectful acknowledgments to the Gentlemen of the Committee, for the honour they have thought proper to confer on me; to accept my best thanks yourself, for your obliging manner in the communication of it.

"I am, Sir, with great respect, your most obedient, humble servant,

"H. DUNCOMBE."

York, June 22.

As the blundering emissaries of our *honest and frugal Administration* have endeavoured to intimidate well-meaning Freeholders, and country Gentlemen, in this and other counties, by throwing out hints, as if ASSOCIATIONS were dangerous things, and contrary to law,
We

We are happy to insert the following letters which have lately passed between the Chairman of the Yorkshire Committee, and the best and ablest Lawyer in Westminster-Hall. After Mr. Dunning's declaration for the *legality* of Associations and Deputations, we shall probably hear no more of those insidious and impotent attempts to MISREPRESENT THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF A FREE PEOPLE.

Burton-Hall, May 14, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is with the highest satisfaction I obey the directions of the Committee of Association for the county of York, by transmitting to you the inclosed copy of a Resolution of Thanks, unanimously voted by that Committee on the 9th of May, 1781, for your distinguished support of the Petition to Parliament, by the late General Meeting of Deputies. Public œconomy is at all times necessary, but it is more especially so, in times of great national calamity, such as we have the misfortune to experience; and if the English People have any right to petition Parliament at all, they must have A RIGHT TO MEET AND CONSULT TOGETHER, in order to exercise that right in a peaceable and orderly manner, which may best promote the common advantage.

"These are the sentiments of a large and respectable body of the Yorkshire Gentlemen; and, in these sentiments, they are happy to find themselves confirmed by the authority of one of the ablest Lawyers of the age, whose much higher praise it is, that he deserves to be considered as one of the firmest friends of our free Constitution.

"The Petition of the Meting of Deputies was a measure, for the success of which the Committee of York was peculiarly anxious, and nothing could have given greater weight to their assertion of the rectitude of that measure, or better hopes of its final decision, than your co-operation in its support, with Sir George Savile and Mr. Duncombe.

"I am, dear Sir, with the highest esteem and regard, your most obedient servant,

"C. WYVILL".

John Dunning, Esq.

Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, June 2, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

"I was honoured with your obliging letter in the due course of the post, communicating to me the thanks of the Committee of Association of the county of York, for my attention and support to the Petition of that and other counties, cities, and places for reforming the waste of public money, and reducing the increased and increasing influence of the crown.

"If I could in return have given you any intelligence that would have been acceptable to you, and to that respectable Committee of the success of the late Petition, I would not have failed to use the earliest opportunity of communicating it to you; but as the issue of that measure was just what you had foreseen and foretold, and I had nothing to convey to you, but my acknowledgments of the honor done me by your favourable acceptance of my impotent endeavours to co-operate with you, to those important objects of your Association, I trusted that you would

excuse

excuse my deferring it to a season of more leisure, than that in which I received your favour.

"Little occurred in the debate which I should have thought worth troubling you with, if I had written to you sooner; but one thing I think I may tell you, which is, that we heard much less than we were led to expect, of the **ILLEGALITY OF COMMITTEES, ASSOCIATIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**. Certainly very little argument to make out their supposed illegality—indeed it would not have been easy, without controverting the **RIGHT OF PETITIONING**, to question the legality of associating and appointing Committees and Deputies, to conduct the Petitions, and promote the objects of them.

"I believe it was found more difficult than those, who were understood to have undertaken it, were aware of when they undertook it.

"One good, at least, results from your perseverance. *It has shewn beyond contradiction, that there are still some men left who do not despair of the Republic, at a time when that despair is so general, and the causes of it so obvious, as would, if any thing could, justify it.*

"In such times, it must surely be matter of satisfaction to know that there are men distinguished by their independence and their integrity, associated for the protection and preservation of our more valuable interests, of whose motives calumny has wanted ingenuity to frame a plausible misrepresentation. Men who so well deserve the public confidence, cannot fail to acquire it.

"I am, with great respect and esteem, dear Sir, your faithful humble servant,

"J. DUNNING".

To the Rev. Mr. Wyvill.

At a Meeting of **DEPUTIES** appointed by the counties of York, Surry, Hertford, Huntingdon, Middlesex, Essex, Kent, Devon, and Nottingham, and the City of Westminster, in March, 1781, the following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That the Parliamentary representation of this kingdom is extremely inadequate.

Resolved, That the extensive public evils have been produced by the gross inadequacy in the Representation of the People in Parliament.

Resolved, That the bill enacting the septennial duration of Parliament (however expedient it might have been rendered by the circumstances of the times) was a violation of the rights of the People; by which the constitutional connection between the constituent body, and their representatives has been impaired, and Parliament has been exposed to great unconstitutional influence.

Resolved, That when, by the peaceful and legal efforts of the People, a more frugal management of the public purse, and a more adequate representation in Parliament, shall have been obtained, the repeal of the septennial bill would form a strong barrier against the inroads of Parliamentary corruption, and the alarming influence of the Crown.

"C. WYVILL, Chairman".

A second Address from the Committee of Association of the County of York, to the Electors of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs within the Kingdom of Great Britain. To which is added, The Resolutions of that Committee, at their Meeting held on the 17th of October, 1781.

PARLIAMENT, in its original form, seems to have been admirably fitted to resist the attacks of corruption.—In that primitive state, a majority of the Electors of England appointed a majority of the House of Commons; and in fact, the right of election ANNUALLY vested in the Body of the People a regular and complete controul over their Trustees. In an Assembly so constituted, the poison of corruption could hardly find admittance in any dangerous degree; respect to the constituent body would generally operate as a preservative against it; and on any appearance of infection, that effectual remedy which the public possessed would be instantly applied. But our easy unsuspicious ancestors unwisely suffered our Monarchs from Henry VI. down to Queen Elizabeth, to mar the ancient Constitution by a most disproportionate addition of Boroughs. By that unhappy negligence, the nation lost in substance the just and necessary right of controul; and then, the corruption of a Parliament, no longer checked by the general voice of the People, ceased to be an impracticable attempt.

But, though the corruptibility of Parliament may be justly dated from that innovation of Royal Authority, the actual corruption of it was reserved for a more unfortunate period. The seeds of political depravity were for ages latent in the defective frame of the House of Commons; and it was possible they might still have remained there, in a state of harmless inactivity, if chance and the ill-judged parsimony of our forefathers, had not presented to the Crown the opportunity for Parliamentary seduction. From the depreciation of money, the ancient salaries paid by the counties, &c. to their respective members, had become too insignificant to be worth their acceptance; and from a most absurd frugality, the necessary augmentation had been improvidently omitted. Hence arose a facility to create a corrupt dependence on the crown, just when the danger of all attempts to controul or abolish Parliament by force had been fully proved by repeated experience.—The growing disposition in that Assembly to listen to temptation, was not long unobserved; it was seized with alacrity, and improved with assiduity; and thus the evils which the inequality of our popular representation is adapted to produce, were at last drawn forth to actual existence.

The virtue of Parliament, which had resisted every effort of violence, was soon relaxed by the skilful distribution of emolument. As this lucrative intercourse grew habitual, their ancient jealousy of the Crown decreased; their responsibility to that public from whom they derived their existence, gradually became an obsolete idea; and in its stead, more courtly maxims of duty, better suited to the new object of their devotion, were easily introduced. At last, a coalition unknown to the genuine Constitution took place; and Parliament, now disengaged from the Body of the Nation, like the Senate of Imperial Rome, meanly submitted to a dependence on that Power, whose encroachments it was originally formed to prevent and controul.

To men of political sagacity, it was not difficult to discern this change in our system of Government. By them its rise and progress were

were distinctly marked, and its pernicious consequences were fairly foretold. But the public, with a generous credulity, continued to hold parliaments in that veneration which their former fidelity had so well deserved. The forms of the constitution, they saw, were still maintained; and the parade of debate still gave to that obsequious Assembly the air and semblance of its ancient freedom. During the earlier part of this period, the nation was too much dazzled with the splendor of military glory, to remark the growing influence of the crown. Afterwards when the practice of corruption was avowed by the minister himself, the dissatisfaction of the public was lulled into acquiescence by the flow of general wealth, and the mildness of Administration. The two first princes of the Hanoverian line hardly knew the extent of that authority which they had so recently obtained. Their right to the throne was not admitted without dispute; and the deposition of James, which had led to their elevation, was an instructive lesson which they could never forget. From these considerations, and from the natural goodness and moderation of those princes, they were content to exercise their authority with caution and lenity; never exceeding the limits of the law, and manifesting on all occasions a respectful deference to the SENSE OF THE PUBLIC. Under their gracious and fortunate administration, the mischiefs of corruption were happily palliated; and hence, rational disapprobation, and the apprehension of evil, yielded to the sense of ease and actual prosperity.

But those popular maxims of government, were less suitable to that situation of superior power, to which their successor attained. He was born and bred a Briton; and he had the fortune to engage the affections of those men, who in apparent contradiction to their high monarchical principles, had long endeavoured to depress his family; but who at last forgetting the exiled prince, transferred to him all the warmth of their zeal and attachment. He was aided by the accession of these natural partizans of the crown, and he was enriched by that augmentation of patronage, which before the conciliation of his new friends, had been unwarily established as a balance to their disaffection. In these circumstances, instead of the condescension and cautious policy of the preceding reigns, ministers were encouraged to adopt, and enabled to realize more lofty ideas of government. In their conception, it ceased to be necessary to conceal from the public eye, the full extent of the influence of the crown, and by their instigation, an open and unscrupulous exercise of it was resolved on.

A fit opportunity for displaying the plenitude of power was quickly found. The popular principles, the zeal, the intrepidity, perhaps the indiscretion of a private gentleman, had given displeasure, where it was most dangerous to displease. To gratify resentment there, the Commons were solicited to punish the offender; and that Assembly could stoop to oppress an already injured individual, and in violation of the first and most important principles of the constitution, to exclude him from his lawful seat in Parliament. During the course of that famous persecution, England first beheld a spectacle, which, if the ancient proportion had been maintained in the popular representation, must have been for ever unseen; a House of Commons distrusted by the Nation, and at variance with it. Hence, by turns those petitions of the People to the crown against the treachery of their Trustees; and to their Trustees against the great and increasing influence of the crown. But as the minister of the sovereign wisely protected his auxiliary Commons from the indignation

of their constituents, his faithful allies have since returned the obligation, with all the zeal of gratitude. The studied contempt with which those complaints were treated from the throne, has been fully repaid in the Senate, by a more insulting neglect of those Petitions, which were acknowledged to be just. The proofs of the absolute ascendant of the crown, have thus been rendered complete and indisputable; **THE DREAM OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT**, so long and so fondly believed, is now a detested illusion; and in consequence of that discovery, discontents have arisen in the Nation, which can only be suppressed by the utter **EXTINCTION OF LIBERTY, OR SATISFIED BY SOME SUBSTANTIAL REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT.**

It would be injurious from the present inactivity of many of our countrymen, to suppose they are not attached to the **CAUSE OF LIBERTY**, with the same generous ardor which distinguished their ancestors. The mass of the people is yet untainted by corruption; it is still animated with equal zeal, and enlightened, perhaps, with a superior knowledge of the true nature and end of government. Their integrity and their attachment to the constitution may be relied on, with equal confidence. But the novelty of their present situation, the difficulties and disadvantages, of their controversy with the crown, the repeated rejection of **A NATIONAL PETITION** by their own Representatives, may well produce a pause of astonishment. In this anxious interval of suspense and gradual recollection, it behoves the Agents of the People thoroughly to explore the ground before them; to enquire from what causes their first effort has been defeated; and to consider by what means the obstacles to their success may be best removed, or most happily surmounted.

In this early stage of the contest, the People seemed to have been foiled, not so much by the strength of their opponents, as from their own inexperience and disunion. The alliance between the crown and a dependent Parliament, however unnatural it may appear on the principles of the constitution, is yet too strongly cemented by mutual benefits to be dissolved by vague and desultory efforts; by Petitions eagerly adopted by the Nation, but irresolutely supported, and at last abandoned with pusillanimity, on a second or a third repulse. With the people, there is an undoubted superiority of numbers; but in many districts, the popular Assemblies, partly from improvidence, partly from a candid expectation of redress by Parliament, neglected to make those necessary arrangements, without which, they could neither co-operate with other petitioning Bodies, nor give a continued support to their Petitions; and thus acting without steadiness, without concert, and uniformity of plan, they have been baffled by the art and activity, the union and regularity of discipline of the **MERCENARIES OF THE CROWN.**

It is by the weight of **A GENERAL ASSOCIATION**, in support of some rational and specific proposal **OF REDRESS, THE BODY OF THE PEOPLE MUST REGAIN THEIR LOST INFLUENCE OVER THEIR TRUSTEES.** That measure alone can collect and consolidate their force, and give permanence and systematical **UNION** to their opposition. Experience has already shown upon a more limited scale, that **ASSOCIATION IS A PRACTICABLE MEASURE**; and that it is a measure of **UNQUESTIONABLE LEGALITY** appears from the spirit of our laws; from the express right to present petitions to parliament, which involves the right to join in any peaceful mode

or the more effectual support of those petitions; and from the acquiescence and tacit confession of the adverse party themselves. The application of this inherent power of the People may have been suspended hitherto, by the real or supposed fidelity of Parliament. But when can ASSOCIATIONS for obtaining a just attention to the complaints of the Nation be necessary, if not when Parliament itself admits that alarming abuses do actually exist, and yet refuses to correct them? When that Assembly, in a moment of repentance, confesses the overruling influence of the crown, and seems to invite the People, by a strenuous exertion of their Constitutional Powers, to remove those shackles from which it wants the virtue to disengage itself.

Under such a perversion of the end for which Parliament was instituted, it would be slavish timidity to acquiesce and submit. On the other hand, to meditate schemes of violence and forcible resistance, would be fool-hardy rashness and impetuosity: it would even be unpardonable folly not to discourage seriously such ill-advised attempts. But they who are friends to Peace and to the Liberty of their Country, may safely steer a middle course between those fatal extremes. By the timely adoption of a legal and CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION, the Nation may be preserved from the hazards and calamities of Civil War, and from the more lasting and intolerable miseries of Arbitrary Government.

To persons of a mild and cautious character of virtue, the propriety of this mode of opposition, may, perhaps, appear in some degree questionable. They see, not without concern for the Constitution, its strong and apparent tendency to destruction: but they distrust that eagerness of zeal, and that more hardy disposition to serve the Public, which prompt men of warmer, but perhaps less amiable dispositions, to stand forth in the hour of danger. By the adherents of corruption these suspicions are cherished by every artifice of misrepresentation; and if the end proposed by the People be just and necessary, if the means hitherto employed be unexceptionably lawful, future designs are but too successfully imputed to them, which every wise and honest man must disapprove. Hence the long neutrality of many liberal and worthy men! Sunk in a state of inefficient repose, they slumber in the midst of perils; and under the specious name of Moderation, cover even from themselves their languor and inactivity. On this large and important class of men, the Rectitude of Opposition to a corrupt System of Government, may fail for a time to make a sufficient impression; but at last dire necessity, and the approach of unavoidable distress, must awake them from their dream of security.

At that moment, when the alarm of danger rouses even the indolent; when men of a mild and unenterprising temper are ready to associate in the common defence, then it is devoutly to be hoped, THE FRIENDS OF THEIR COUNTRY will have adjusted their disputes; and having settled their PLAN OF PUBLIC REFORMATION with prudence, will be prepared to support it with unanimity. Then it will behove the Opponents of the undue influence of the crown to unite their legal exertions, and to pour on, in one unbroken current, against the corruptions of our Government: for that moment will be decisive of our fate. If the Collective Body be then misled or divided in the pursuit of separate or improper objects, their pacific efforts must be wasted once more in unconnected and unavailing struggles. And in that

case, it is easy to foresee, that no future attempts to restore the Constitution by legal means, can have any rational hope or prospect of success.

Among the active Opponents of the undue influence of the crown, the Advocates for the **ECONOMICAL REFORMATION ALONE**, compose a numerous, and in rank and figure the most distinguished class. To recommend their *palliative plan*, they display the mischiefs of innovation, and treat propositions for the melioration of Parliament as specious, but as impracticable projects. In their conception, the improvement of the popular representation by any of those alterations which other Reformers have proposed, is a speculative advantage almost impossible to be attained; and a **SHORTER DURATION OF PARLIAMENT** is not only undesirable, but positively evil. Instead of attempting to correct the internal disposition of Parliament to admit temptation, they would content themselves with reducing that ostensible fund of corruption, which is externally applied with such fatal success. This, they contend, was the object of Reformation which lately formed the true centre of union of the English People; in pursuit of which, exhortations to unanimity would have been altogether superfluous and unnecessary. And they observe, not without a mixture of severity, that if the Nation had not been misled by wild and visionary schemes, their discontents would have been soon appeased by the satisfactory redress of those grievances which had been the subject of their unanimous complaint.

It must be confessed, the ground on which the People commenced their opposition, was chosen with propriety. They felt the hardships of an expensive war; they saw glaring abuses in the management of the public purse; the request for the correction of those abuses was founded on principles which the Friend to Liberty must approve, and which even the Advocate for War could not contradict. But if that patronage which forms the visible influence of the crown had been abridged in the most indefensible instances, **WITHOUT A RADICAL REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT**, the practice of Corruption would have been carried on to as great an extent as ever, only perhaps in a more dangerous and degrading mode. The means of seduction are in the hands of Ministers, to be applied at their discretion; and self-preservation would have taught them the proper application of those means. Who can suppose, *loans of money* would not have been contracted on terms still more grossly disadvantageous to the nation; and the loss of sinecure places and unmerited pensions would not have been compensated by shares of *beneficial subscriptions*, in an adequate proportion? or, if the Minister had chosen to vary his mode of gratification, what could have hindered the immediate increase of the *Secret Service-Money*? or the augmentation of the **ROYAL DEBTS**, incurred to any amount which might be necessary, and sure to be discharged, without examination, by a grateful Parliament?

When a Senate, chiefly nominated by venal or dependent Electors, has received the taint of corruption, it wants that corrective principle which might throw off the infection, and restore its original purity—the controul of honest and uninfluenced constituents. In such an Assembly, acceptance frequently repeated wears off the sensations of shame and remorse; the guilty habit of receiving gradually creates a demand that must be satisfied; and thus **CORRUPTION** becomes at last the avowed principle of Government. In this stage of political depravity, a Parliament accustomed to prostitution may be induced to embrace the most pernicious

pernicious measures of a bad, but prodigal Administration, with as much warmth, as it would reject the best and wisest plans of that honest Statesman who should scorn the support of pecuniary influence. This is the consummation of a corrupt system of Government, which evidently contains the seeds of dissolution. Ruin is its natural tendency, and must be its certain consequence, unless by an amended representation in Parliament, the due controul of the Constitution be restored to the Body of the People.

Events had almost verified the truth of this speculation, when the increasing influence of the crown alarmed the fears and excited the opposition of the Country. At that moment, *without previous concert or communication*, a Plan for the better Security of the Independence of Parliament, &c. was announced in the House of Commons. The views of that Bill were nearly coincident with those by which the People meant to regulate their proposed Petition; and it is acknowledged with due respect to its celebrated Author, that it was happily calculated to facilitate the wishes then expressed by the Public. It hardly could be expected that a Senator yet uncertain of the popular support, however distinguished by zeal and abilities, should offer a more extensive plan of redress. But when the People, distrusting their Representatives, sought protection, against the over-bearing influence of the crown, in legal ASSOCIATION AND IN THE REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT, it was then as little to be expected, that the popular Agents should stop short, and recommend, as the Object of Union, that Economical System which is certainly inadequate to the efforts and expectations of the Collective Body. That conduct would have been a contradiction to the *first intimation* of their purpose, and to all their subsequent proceedings; it would have been treachery to themselves, and to those by whom they were appointed to act; and it would have forfeited their claim to any share of the Public Confidence, as disinterested and independent men. Misrepresentation, in language alike injurious to the Leaders of Opposition, and to the popular Agents, would have irrecoverably blasted the Public Cause, as a device cunningly contrived by disappointed Statesmen, and their factious Adherents. And thus, in pursuit of unanimity on *that ground*, distrust and jealousy would have been still more widely spread, and the ASSOCIATIONS OF THE PEOPLE, instead of being more closely cemented, would have been divided and broken up by an irreparable breach.

Men conversant in the business of Parliament may have regretted that a more cautious policy did not restrain the zeal of the ASSOCIATIONS to the correction of *official abuses*; and the ASSOCIATIONS in their turn may have lamented that more vigorous counsels did not determine their Parliamentary friends to adopt those *primary objects* of the popular plan, which alone can give efficacy or stability to the Economical REFORMATION. These are the unavoidable differences, not the faults, of Public Men, acting with integrity, but *without mutual intelligence* in circumstances which are in a great measure new to the most extensive observation. But since late experience has still more clearly proved the utter degeneracy of Parliament, and consequently the distrust of the People has been increased and confirmed, a more effectual REFORMATION may now appear evidently necessary even to the former friends of palliative measures. And since a divided opposition to the crown cannot accomplish a due reduction of its alarming power; and no considerable Body of the People can ever be induced to unite in a steady defence

defence of the common liberties, but on the ground of **PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION**, it surely may be hoped, from the virtue and public spirit of those honored persons, that their Coalition with the People on that ground is not a distant event.

It is not surprizing that even among the declared friends to a **REFORMATION** of **PARLIAMENT**, a considerable variation of sentiment should be found, and different systems of constitutional improvement should appear to different minds to deserve the preference; for on this, or on any subject, who can expect an exact coincidence of judgment in such a multitude of Independent Men?

That the representation of the People is extremely inadequate; that the **SEPTENNIAL DURATION** of **PARLIAMENT** is a dangerous and unwarrantable Innovation; that corruption cannot be restrained; that our Liberties cannot be secured but by the correction of those gross abuses; these are propositions in which there is a most unanimous agreement. But whether the People should attempt to restore **ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS**; to extend the right of suffrage universally; and to establish a perfect equality of representation; or whether it does not behove them rather to confine their efforts to the accomplishment of a more limited plan; to **SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS TO A TERM NOT EXCEEDING THREE YEARS**, and to reinforce the sound part of our representation by the addition of One Hundred Members to the Counties and the Metropolis: These are questions which for some time were the subject of frequent discussion and much anxious deliberation; but not more than their importance to the public well deserved.

On behalf of the more extensive plan, much was urged on the true principles of Government with indefatigable zeal; and the considerations which could be drawn from the natural rights of Men and the ancient privileges of Englishmen were presented in every form of argument, with equal industry and ability. It is indisputably true, that **ANNUAL ELECTIONS** of Parliament were from the earliest times the practice of our forefathers: and frequency of election in a state of representation *not essentially defective*, would tend strongly to maintain a due connection between the Constituent Body and their Trustees; it would diffuse a more general knowledge of the importance of that right; and the attachment to our happy constitution would be more sincere and general, as its privileges were more extended and better understood. That mankind are naturally equal, is also a proposition which cannot be denied; and although wherever Society is established, the introduction of inequality in some respects, is unavoidable, yet every humane and equitable mind must disapprove invidious exclusions, by which that inequality is unnecessarily increased. The right of suffrage, though not universally, was more extensively enjoyed by our ancestors before the reign of Henry VI. than in the succeeding period: and if the manners and prejudices of the present age could admit the *restoration of that privilege* in its fullest extent, with **AN ANNUAL CHOICE OF REPRESENTATIVES**, the Advocates for the more moderate plan would rejoice at the change.

The diversity of sentiment, therefore, which has in some measure retarded the **UNION** of the People, arose, not from a difference of political principles; for in them there is an entire agreement, but solely from considerations of a prudential nature. The questions in debate have been, not, whether those doctrines be maintainable in argument, for it

is admitted they are; but whether it be probable in the present state of the nation, that those doctrines in their full extent, are reducible to practice?—And if it be highly improbable, that a Reformation on that extensive plan could be carried into execution, whether it be not expedient that the People wave somewhat of their justifiable claims, and content themselves with that mode of Redress which is *less complete in theory*, but which appears *more easily attainable* by peaceful means, and when attained, fully adequate to the purpose of their opposition?

On the one hand it was observed, that an Army, as dangerous to the Constitution by the weight of influence as by its military prowess, is now become an established augmentation of the Royal Power; that an immense National Debt, with its concomitant train of taxes, contracts, subscriptions, creates another abundant source of influence unknown to our ancestors; that a large accession of Patronage has accrued to the crown from the East-Indian Territories, and the other numerous settlements of the British Empire; that Parliament itself, seduced by those multiplied attractions, has become but too visibly dependent on the crown; that if this great aggregate of power should receive any material augmentation, it would be impossible by any union which could be formed, to recover the balance of the Constitution; and consequently, although this ought not to intimidate but rather to excite the People instantly to concert the lawful means of that recovery, yet since the power to be opposed is truly formidable, and a defeat would be fatal to all succeeding generations, that it behoves them to proceed with caution equal to that fortitude. It was farther observed, that while the adherents of corruption would alike brand with the odious name of *innovations*, the improvements held out by each of the popular plans, however authorised they may be by former example, or justified by reason and the necessity of Reformation, *the more extensive system* proposing an abolition of all our present election-franchises, and a distribution of those franchises anew in a different proportion, would probably appear injurious also to a multitude of Electors, who yet would zealously support *the more moderate plan* for restoring the Constitution; that this total departure from the present establishment of the Lower House of Parliament, even where private interest was not materially affected, would alienate many by the magnitude of the operation, and more perhaps by its contrariety to the manners of the age; that it would offend the pride of the wealthy, excite the fears of the moderate, and shock the prejudices of men unaccustomed to political speculation; and consequently that to contend with the crown on this disadvantageous ground, would be to expose the Liberties of the Nation to almost certain ruin, by struggling to communicate the election-franchise to persons who too seldom know the value of it, or express a wish to obtain it.

On the other hand, it was considered, that although *the more moderate plan* would enlarge the House of Commons, yet it would leave the present fabric untouched; would preserve the franchises of the whole mass of Electors undiminished; and in every respect would be less remote from the habits and practice of the age; that by the addition of at least One Hundred Members to the representation of the counties and the metropolis, their inferiority to the Boroughs would be in a great measure redressed, and the advantage of those Electors who constitute the bulk of the Nation would be promoted without injury, and with little sensible inconvenience to any other class of Constituents; that although

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS certainly were not excluded by the more limited proposal, yet in fact its immediate aim was the repeal of the Septennial Bill; which being confessedly a temporary expedient, utterly repugnant to the spirit of the Constitution, however excusable from the necessity of those times, would probably be now obtained with less difficulty than ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS; and might properly be considered as the best preparatory measure to their acquisition; and consequently that in all these respects the preference, in the view of feasibility, was evidently due to the more limited plan.

In regard of efficacy *the more extensive scheme* might indeed claim the priority of the choice, if under the present circumstances of the nation the establishment of it could be accomplished. But what is the superior efficacy of an impracticable system? the praise and perhaps the wish of the rational Patriot, but not the end of his political labours; for they will ever be directed to that best and most beneficial plan, which in given circumstances can be attained. It is the just complaint of the Nation, that a corrupt majority of Burgesses may be gained to support the most pernicious measures against the sense of the incorrupt part of the Legislature, and the wishes of the public; with this aggravation of the evil, that the possibility of relief by popular interference is protracted by a SEPTENNIAL DURATION OF PARLIAMENT. To *these fundamental abuses* the repeal of the SEPTENNIAL BILL, and the addition of One Hundred Members to the Counties, &c. as a balance to the Boroughs, would be A SUBSTANTIAL CORRECTION. Under this emended representation, purged from every visible taint of undue influence, and subject to the more frequent controul of the Nation by elections at an interval never exceeding THREE YEARS, the whole System of Corruption would be overturned, and the Constitution would acquire a degree of permanent security which it never attained in any preceding period.

By considerations like these, the People were induced to frame their ASSOCIATIONS on this more limited ground; and, as it then seemed reasonable to conclude, so recent experience has now most manifestly proved, that their plan was not too narrow for the views and expectations of their Countrymen. With some exceptions of no great moment, these principles have been adopted or approved by every ASSOCIATED BODY, and confirmed by A GENERAL DEPUTATION from the respective Committees. These principles have also received the declared approbation of Senators in each House, whose Wisdom, Integrity, and Public Spirit, are at once the honor and reproach of those Assemblies.

A Bill on *the more enlarged plan* was indeed offered to the Lords by a Nobleman of the first rank and reputation*; and the motion was recorded on their journal as a solemn recognition of those principles.—But no Association has been formed on that ground, because in the popular apprehension even that weighty recommendation could not compensate the great and perhaps insurmountable difficulties of the measure. But when the People had thus decisively given their preference to *the more limited plan*, their Noble Advocate, far from pressing them with the pertinacity of disputation to re-consider and accept his favoured system, generously laboured in concert with an illustrious Friend† to accomplish

O

* His Grace the Duke of Richmond.

† The Right Honourable the Earl of Shelburne,

accomplish a general Coalition on the ground of their Association.— This was the wisdom of judicious Statesmen—this was the magnanimity of true Patriots. Their virtuous, though hitherto unavailing efforts will be remembered with lasting gratitude and veneration; and in their zealous assistance on every future emergency, the trust and confidence of the nation will be reposed.

The Committee of Association for the County of York have once more presumed thus freely to communicate to their Fellow Electors, their sentiments on *the decline of the Constitution, and the means of its Restoration*. From this survey of the various PLANS OF REFORMATION which have been offered to the PEOPLE, their choice seems wisely to have been fixed on that system in which *efficacy* and *practicability* are most advantageously combined; and in the judgment of this Committee, if that SUBSTANTIAL REDRESS cannot be obtained, the formalities of an Upper and a Lower Assembly may still be continued, but the LIBERTY OF BRITAIN must soon be no more. When the Nation has lost the ordinary controul of the Constitution over the Representative Body; when notwithstanding their repeated complaints, alarming abuses are protected and increased, and measures destructive to the common weal are supported and pushed on by that Assembly, the necessity for *some popular interference in a less ordinary way*, becomes apparent and incontestible. To rectify a disordered Legislature must indeed be a work of the greatest toil and difficulty; but there is yet in the Independent Part of the Community, a fund of vigour adequate to the task; and the ancient spirit of the Constitution still affords unexhausted resources to the People, for a lawful, orderly and effectual interposition. Peaceful Association is the lawful mode adopted by this Committee, in concert with many of their countrymen; and by a steady prosecution of the *more moderate PLAN FOR THE REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT in this mode*, they still trust the Constituent Body may regain its ascendant over the Representative Assembly. Far, therefore, from wishing to promote confusion, or to prompt their fellow-citizens to deeds of violence and desperation, they exhort them with conscientious sincerity to confine their efforts within the bounds of legality. But within those limits they exhort them with equal earnestness, resolutely to oppose that SYSTEM OF CORRUPTION which is alike the bane of National Morality, and the ruin of PUBLIC LIBERTY.

With these views the Committee of Yorkshire first embarked in this cause; in strict conformity with them they have hitherto proceeded, and are determined to regulate their whole political deportment. *They have been menaced by High Authority; they have been defamed by Reverend Calumny*; but conscious of the purity of their intentions, certain of the legality of their conduct, they cheerfully commit their reputation to the justice of their countrymen, AND THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY TO THE PROTECTION OF THOSE LAWS WHICH CANNOT BE INFRINGED, WITHOUT A DIRECT ASSUMPTION OF DESPOTIC POWER.

After which the following Resolutions were agreed to:

Whereas it has been represented to this Committee, that the conduct of the Clergy who are Members of this Association, hath been censured from High Authority; and that they have been given to understand that their LATE EFFORTS in support of the LIBERTY and CONSTITUTION of this Country were *foreign to the function of a Clergyman, and not the road to preferment*.

Resolved,

Resolved, That a Protestant by entering into Holy Orders does not abandon his CIVIL RIGHTS.

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Committee be given to those Reverend Gentlemen who, thus preferring the public good to their own private emoluments, have stood forth the firm friends to the true interests of their country,

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

Guildhall, April 11, 1782.

Committee of the Livery of London, appointed to correspond with the Committees of the several Counties, Cities, &c. of the kingdom.

Mr. Alderman CROSBY in the Chair.

The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.

Resolved, That, in consequence of that dismissal of a profuse and dangerous Administration, the powers of Government having been entrusted with the avowed opponents of corruption, this Committee doth fully confide in those honoured persons, as Ministers, determined to set the rare example of public frugality, as Patriots, active to correct abuses themselves, and friendly to promote every wise and just measure of Reformation, which may be suggested by others, effectually to secure the FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Resolved, That, in the judgment of this Committee, unless a melioration of Parliament can be obtained, the best official regulations may soon be set aside, the wisest and most virtuous Ministers may soon be displaced; by the prevalence of that corrupt influence now subsisting in the House of Commons, which its defective frame naturally generates, and which has already so nearly effected the ruin of this unhappy country.

BRASS CROSBY, Chairman.

Nottingham County Meeting.

At a Meeting of the County of Nottingham, the Right Honourable Lord GEO. SUTTON in the Chair, the following Petition was unanimously agreed to:

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled,
The humble Petition of the Nobility, Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Nottingham,*

Sheweth,

That from whatever causes the inadequate and disproportionate representation of the Commons of this realm may have arisen, it is an evil of a very high magnitude, which has not been less injurious to the past, than it is dangerous to the future interests of our Country, and which we trust it will not be thought unworthy the wisdom and virtue of this Honourable House to Reform.

To this wisdom and virtue we respectfully confide the Reform; but it is our earnest Petition that no delay may be admitted in taking this grievance into the serious consideration of this House; at the same time we submit to the judgment of this Honourable House, THE PRESENT STATE OF THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENT, trusting that this Honourable House will provide such a Redress as may diffuse a general satisfaction, restore the purity of this Honourable House as the true

Representative of the People, and do away every suspicion which weakens their confidence in the united Legislature of the nation.

And your Petitioners will every pray.

GEO. SUTTON, Chairman.

The company assembled at the Moot-Hall, in Mansfield, about twelve o'clock, pursuant to the advertisement of the High Sheriff. The business commenced with a motion of John Gilbert Cooper, Esq. inviting the Right Hon. Lord George Sutton to the chair, as the High Sheriff had not thought fit to give his personal attendance. This motion, seconded by Launcelot Rolleston, Esq. was unanimously approved, and his Lordship took the chair; from which he informed the company, that they were called together to determine upon the propriety of presenting a Petition to Parliament, to take into their consideration the DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMONS, at the same time to recommend to their attention the duration of Parliament.

Lord Viscount Galway then addressed the Meeting, observing that the advertisement of the High Sheriff determined immediately his attendance, as he thought it the duty of every gentleman to be present at a public Meeting, properly summoned, that he might in a manly way give his assent or dissent to the subjects of their deliberation. That he had come to Mansfield, ignorant of what might be the specific propositions of those gentlemen who had signed the requisition, but decided as to his own conduct, that if the propositions should not meet his ideas of propriety, he should publicly testify his disapprobation; as it was his opinion, that a silent acquiescence in the measures of a County Meeting, implied the approbation of those who had not opposed it. He was happy however in assuring the Meeting, that the objects of the Petition, which would be proposed to them, had his entire and cordial approbation. It was conveyed in terms of decency and moderation, it was clear and precise, and it expressed a proper respect to those whom it was addressed to. It was on a subject of high importance, and which perhaps hardly needed discussion to meet the approbation of the whole Assembly. It was no party business, he was himself no party man, nor any way connected with any body of public men. He acted from his own views of public measures, and by those should his conduct ever be directed. He was sensible that the House of Commons was not such a Representation of the People as it ought to be; and though his own interests might be much affected by the Reform which was in view, yet would he not suffer private motives to stand in the way of what was essential to the Constitution, and necessary to the safety of the whole. He wished the people of this country to have what was their undoubted Right, A PURE REPRESENTATION, unmixed with other influence. It behoved Parliament to attend to this Right, and therefore the prayer of the Petition was reasonable, and must approve itself to all.

His Lordship then read the Petition.

Mr. Dickenson Rastal being then called on by the Chairman, said, that not doubting but so good a cause would have been supported by a multitude of able advocates, he was rather unprepared; but, however, that his sentiments, such as they were, he would trust to the indulgence of the Meeting in the language of plain sincerity. He then commented on the success of their former Petitions, which, notwithstanding the prognostications of some, and the apprehensions of others, had produced

no violence or commotions, but had merely driven from the administration of the kingdom a Minister grown old in political sin, and strengthened by experience in the science of corruption. He said, they did not wish to alter the Constitution; they only wanted to bring it back to what it was before. Influence was a science, and Parliamentary Suffrages a merchandize. He observed, that for the sake of unanimity, they had confined their Petition to one object, but that his wishes went to others, particularly the Duration of Parliaments, and the custom of granting Private Benevolences to the Crown before the sanction of Parliament had been obtained, which might soon raise it above the assistance of the Commons. After stating the grievances of the nation, and concluding in the words of a noble author, that if they were not redressed, the time would soon be at hand, "WHEN BRITAIN MUST PERISH WITH HER DEGENERATE SONS," he proceeded to obviate the objections which had been made to the Petitioners. He said that at first they were taxed with such Democratical notions, as nothing but ill humour could suggest, and nothing but absurdity itself believe. That now the cry was, they were no party, that by a party the closet had been stormed, and that they wanted to rule the kingdom by party. What was party? they knew what it was to have an administration without party, it was to lose one half of the empire, and to disgust the other; it was to raise jealousies between the King and his People, and a thousand other evils. Party, he said, he understood to be concert in council, unanimity of professions, identity of objects, and concurrence in operation.

Mr. Heywood then addressed the Chairman, said, that such was the obvious necessity of a Reform in the Constitution of the House of Commons, that it needed not much ingenuity to produce arguments in favour of any measure which might lead to so desirable an end. He asked, to what our present degraded state, as a nation, was owing, but to the unwise and criminal conduct of Parliament. To this must be referred the commencement and the obstinate prosecution of a war, which had been productive only of calamity and disgrace, an issue which could not have been experienced if the collective wisdom and virtue of a Free People had entered into the Legislation. This was proved from fact; for who were the constant supporters of our mad politics, but the Members for decayed Boroughs, the Representatives of a mere handful of Electors, who generally had no choice at all, while the wisdom and virtue of opposition had been found in the County Members, and the Representatives of large and populous towns, where a free choice in a great degree resides. And if this free choice prevailed in any considerable degree, would it ever be that men would be sent to Parliament to take care of the national interests, who were marked for indifference to every interest but their own? that young men would be sent to Parliament, in which they were to learn to be wise, not to impart and communicate wisdom, already acquired? that any would be sent to Parliament merely to partake of the privileges which it affords its Members? and yet one, or all of these, constitute the views of many who have obtained seats in that House. He concluded with recommending it as the duty of every one to aim at that regulation which the source of our misfortunes pointed out to them. We might then hope that our national Counsels would be distinguished by wisdom and disinterestedness, instead of folly and selfishness.

At this period Sir George Savile being respectfully desired to communicate his sentiments, he readily complied, but observed, that it was almost

almost unnecessary, his decided opinion of the Representation of this kingdom, being, he presumed, so well known, as to leave no one ignorant of it. Indeed it was to him a question so plain, so self-evident as in the very stating of it to the mind, to carry conviction with it: if Representation had any meaning, the present state of Parliament, as the Representative of the Commons, was an absurdity, a contradiction to the very terms; it was not representation, it was misrepresentation. There could not be thought to be two opinions upon the subject. And as it was absurd and contrary, so it had been full of mischief, or, as the Petition had happily stated it, it had been as injurious to the past, as it was dangerous to the future interests of the People. In very strong, in very pathetic terms, which the compiler of this account cannot do justice to, he deplored the ruined, humiliated state, to which this radical defect in the Representative Body had reduced the kingdom. Perhaps the warmth of a truly patriot mind, the indignancy of a generous spirit, led him to speak too severely of the consequences. The present endeavours of the people to stay the progress of the ruin were, he feared, to use a trite phrase, like fastening the door when the steed was stolen, or, as if a physician should order an alternative, when his patient was dying of an apoplexy. As no hope however could originate from any other source than the Reform in view, he could entertain no idea of a different opinion, but he was glad that the two objects of the Petition, viz. the reforming the Representation, and shortening the duration of Parliament, were separated from each other, and did not stand in the very contemplation of the Petitioners on the same ground. The necessity of a Reform in both did not even to himself appear equally clear, and though to both he could conscientiously subscribe, yet many, who were sanguine friends to the first measure, had more than doubts with respect to the latter, and might have been repelled from signing the Petition altogether, if the Petition had been so framed, as to require an equal assent to both. The one therefore, to which no man could frame a decent objection, was the body and soul of the Petition, it was the subject of clear, unambiguous, decided request; the other, with whatever doubts and differences of opinion were annexed to it, was submitted to the sober deliberation and judgment of Parliament.

Mr. Walker next claimed the attention of the Meeting, but in a different view of the subject. He wished rather to obviate objections, than to add any thing to the unanswerable arguments by which the propriety and utility of the Petition had been enforced. Many specious objections had been and would be urged to divert the minds of the People from the salutary object of their Petition, that it was a novelty, a moulding the Constitution anew; that if wise and right in itself, it did not meet the present temper of the kingdom, and being merely the speculation of a few, would only divide the nation in a moment, which of all others asked the united aid of every heart and hand, and that it would unnerve the executive power, by weakening the dependence of administration upon the Commons, from whom the supplies of government were to be received. To each of these objections he proposed to answer in their order.

The first, viz. The object of the People's prayer was an absolute innovation, appeared to be a formidable objection; but he trusted that a little attention to the origin and progress of our singular Constitution, would shew the objection to be wholly unfounded, that the evil complained of in the Petition was itself the thing abhorrent and strange to the ideas of

Englishmen,

Englishmen, and that the redress petitioned for was simply a renovation. If this could be clearly shewn, it could not fail to reconcile the minds of every one as to their old habitude and right. But as this was a matter of historic evidence, he presumed that he should not affront his audience in giving them a brief abstract of the rise, progress, and discriminating spirit of the English Constitution, as no unnecessary information to many whose situation in life might render so useful a knowledge not easily accessible to them. He asserted, that the actuating principle and virtue of the English Constitution, was derived from, and founded upon, the primæval rights of human nature, upon the sense, conviction, and invariable exercise of these Rights with our early ancestors, to which their being sequestered for ages from the knowledge of the dangerous resentments of more polished European nations had principally contributed. That passing from the east along the tract of northern Europe, and uncontaminated with the servile maxims of Aristocratical and Monarchical Government, to which the southern regions had long been habituated, they had descended into the rich provinces of the Roman empire, and imported with them wherever they established themselves, the liberal spirit by which society had till that moment been conducted amongst them. This spirit consisted in the equality of all, *Equality of Rights*, and that, in this view, every member of the community stood upon the same ground. Whatever distinctions particular exigencies might require, they were distinctions of utility, artificial arrangements for a common good, often abolished when the exigence ceased, but never subversive of the primary, the fundamental right to Property, to Liberty, to Legislation, to Life in all. Kings were originally but the leaders of their military expeditions, and Barons, subordinate chieftains under them, instituted to serve the purposes of the state, dependent for their very existence and authority upon the will of the state, controulable by, and accountable to the state, and which the necessities of the state, in its lengthened struggle for dominion with the natives of the Roman provinces, rendered permanent establishments. The state consisted originally in the assembly of the whole community, in whom resided the supreme power, and in which was combined, the military, the legislative, and often the judicial and executive character. But when the resistance of the natives was utterly subdued, and they were reduced to the condition of villainage or slavery, the necessity of convening the whole community, in their military character, no longer existed, and the inconvenience of general assemblies rendered it expedient to provide some other mode of discharging the legislative duties of the state. To the greater chieftains or barons, a personal attendance was rather an honour than an inconvenience, while the lesser barons, who with the greater were all originally pares, peers, or equals, were permitted to appear in the great assemblies of the nation, by their representatives or proxies. In the collective assemblies of the whole community, is seen the origin of Parliament at all, in the latter institution the first distinction of two orders in Parliament, viz. the greater Barons or Lords, who sat in person, and the representatives of the lesser Barons, who are now the Knights or the Representatives of counties. In this character Parliament continued for many years, till the contests between the greater Barons and the Monarch, and the advantages of commerce to both, introduced a further change, a new species of Representatives in the great Parliament of the nation. The frequent necessities of the Monarch invited him to emancipate the villains or slaves on his own

Royal

Royal domain, by incorporating them with certain privileges, to erect them into the character of Freemen; from this institution the Monarch derived their personal service in his wars, and pecuniary aids from that wealth which their privileges and the exercise of commerce soon acquired to them. This example, so advantageous to the Monarch, was followed by the Barons, and corporations increased through the whole kingdom. The convenience of receiving from them grants of money, procured their summons to Parliament by their Representatives; the increasing number, wealth, and power of this new order of Freemen, taught them their own consequence, and the necessities of the state gained them a full admission to all the rights of legislation in Parliament, and set them upon a level with the Representatives of the counties. Thus we perfected the form of the English Parliament, when to the Representatives of the counties were added those of the boroughs or incorporated towns, at present stiled the Citizens and Burgesses. The liberal spirit of Christianity co-operated with the utility of the state, and silently did away the very idea of a villain or slave. Thus whatever entered into the full idea of a free man, whatever was of the essence of his rights in the first constitution of the invading nation, was extended to every freeman, and of these rights, that of Legislation, either in person or by their Representative, was a primary and fundamental one. The neighbouring nations had originally the same constitution, the principles from which the form of English government had its source, but not availing themselves of the same circumstances, they acquired not the same enlargement, the same security in the Representation of the Commons at large, against the encroachment of power; and they have fallen, as we behold them, from a state of the highest freedom into an abject dependence on Despotic Monarchs: An awful example to these kingdoms, to our Nobles, with all the fancied dignity of power, as it is not in human nature to provide a solid bulwark against the continual operating advantages of a Crown, unless in the spirit, the freedom, the equal *Rights of the People*. But what he wished his audience to collect from the whole review, was this simple, this great principle, that Legislation, either in person or by representation, is the *equal, the common Right of all*, that it is inherent in the very idea of an English Freeman, that it was imported into this island with our early ancestors, that the grant which embraced fellow-men as freemen, communicated this right, *and that as all are now free*, it is communicated to all. The inequalities of this common right which have taken place, and which the Petition aims to redress, have been created by inattention, by accident, by abuse, but do not issue from the spirit or regular usage of the Constitution, and have greatly risen to their present dangerous height, against the very intention of the present constitution, from those changes which could not possibly have been foreseen. It was the convenience of the Monarch which first erected slaves into corporations of freemen, and summoned them to Parliament. Hence arose to the Crown that dangerous prerogative, which was too long permitted, of summoning Representatives to Parliament from whatever place it pleased. This was one source of unequal Representation, which the wisdom of Parliament has indeed guarded against in future, but too late to prevent the evil consequence. When it intercepted the further exercise of this prerogative of the Crown, it ought to have pursued the spirit of this Reform, it ought to have rectified the abuses which the prerogative had already established. Similar inequalities have taken place from the creating of Corporations by the Barons

Barons on their separate estates, which through their influence obtaining a summons to Parliament, the absolute property of these Boroughs has been conveyed with the estates to their successors. Another, and perhaps the most fruitful source, has been in the changes and revolutions which the lapse of time has produced. Great and populous towns have vanished as it were from the face of the land, and have hardly any existence but upon paper, yet the right of Representation continues, though the very cause and reason of Representation has ceased. While the very same time, and fluctuations of commerce, have created many more towns of the first rank and consequence in the kingdom, to which no representation has been extended. Thus, in whatever view we contemplate the spirit and design of our constitution, we see clearly that the prayer of the Petition has nothing of innovation, nothing strange in it, nothing but what the very idea of Parliament embraces and intends, nothing but what is essential to and inherent in the RIGHTS OF FREEMEN, and that the greatest abuses in the Representation are contrary to the very designs of our ancestors themselves, unwise and improvident in many instances as these ancestors have been. It has ever been deemed an excellence in our Constitution, that there was resident in it the power and virtue of recurring to its original principles, whenever it shall be found to have dangerously degenerated from them; and if a government mean well, it would be absolutely suicide in it not to rectify abuses, which mere accident, time, or corruption, have introduced, and which, if not redressed, threaten to destroy all its character, and all its well being.

Having removed the imputation of novelty in the redress which the Petition prays for, Mr. Walker next adverted to the second objection, that however wise and right in itself, it did not meet the present temper of the kingdom, but would only disturb, divide, and distract the nation, in a moment which required all its Union. But let these men, whoever or of whatever rank they be, withdraw each their individual opposition, and the objection falls to the ground. Allowing the right, the wisdom, and utility of the Petition, they themselves should not swell the number of its opponents, an objection confessed to be founded in mere obstinacy and perverseness, in a refusal of public good, should not lie at their door; every fellow subject who will not accord with the Petition, should meet the friends of it on the ground of Constitutional Right, of national utility, and when all manly and virtuous reply fails them, it is a crime of the highest form not to be a friend, not to take a decided part in the cause of truth and right. It is not a rash and passionate censure to affirm, that with a silent acquiescence in the right and utility of the Petition, no good motive is at the bottom of that mind, which still continues to object to it, and throws any difficulty in the way of its success. The question between the friends and the enemies of the Petition is reduced to a short issue. Its friends plead the justice, the wisdom, the expedience of the measure, the horrid experience of past mischiefs, the well-founded apprehensions of growing evils from the same malignant source. Let the enemies of the Petition stand forth in the face of their country, and shew that it is not just, not wise, not expedient; that the abuses complained of have not been disgraceful and ruinous, and have not any ugly aspect on the future: let them shew this, or continuing a silent and sullen opposition, let them abide the consequence; the imputation of having renounced in this instance all the obligations of a Citizen, of a well-wisher to the public good. It is
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with men of this complexion that the true difficulty rests, they are the authors of the opposition, with them lies all the crime of disunion; but whether timidity, a spirit of no English hue, or views which are not fit to be owned, create and support their disaffection, it becomes them to know that an Englishman cannot respect an opposition so founded, that the timid, the illiberal and the selfish, are the enemies whom he expects to meet with in the field of all his virtuous contests. But it is lastly urged, that the Reform, if it should be adopted, will unnerve the executive power, by undoing that influence, that ascendancy of administration over the House of Commons, which is pleaded to be necessary to government. But if the plea fail, the Reform ought not to be resisted on this ground. This is the last refuge of the enemies to a *Parliamentary Reform*, and in the supposed strength of which I verily believe many are really deceived. But a definition of terms, particularly of the government, to which an unconstitutional influence is necessary, may contribute to undeceive them. It is undoubtedly necessary to a government which respects not the popular opinion, but this is not, or ought not to be the Government of England; and if it be, is the very strongest reason why an influence of so cursed a nature should be utterly extirpated. Some ambiguous and covert phrases require to be turned into plain English, in order clearly to understand them. In plain English then, a decided majority of the Minister in the House means, *that it should be the Minister's House, not the House of Commons of England*, and whether this be an honest, virtuous, and salutary English maxim, I think may be left to the effrontery of our boldest enemy to say. What! a majority, prepared, disposed to carry through the Minister's measures; sworn, bound, and passive to his will, without regard to the good pleasure of the people, by whom, and for whom they are or ought to be! No! the Constitution means the Minister no such Majority, it abhors it, and no utility of a wise and virtuous government requires it. No majority in the very idea of that House is intended, but what the wisdom, honesty, and patriotism of the Minister's conduct deserves, and ever will procure to him. Let a Minister stand forth, and answer for this to Parliament and to the People, and every one may answer with his life for a triumphant majority, without the intervention of troublesome, illiberal, and dirty intrigues. Let any one for a moment conceive a Parliament in factious opposition to such a Minister, and almighty as it may presume itself to be, he will soon perceive that there is an almighty power, which will controul and convert it to the public good. Standing in the midway between the Crown and the People, and disowned, unsupported by either, Parliament would feel the awe of that constitutional spirit, which is the secret stay and security on which the fabric of our government rests, which has and I trust will save it to the most perilous encounters. This is not idle theory, it was verified by the conduct of the greatest and honestest Minister that England ever knew. Called to the helm by the dangers and necessities of the state, he had no interest at Court or in Parliament, but with a virtuous magnanimity he courted neither, he left it to his conduct to justify himself to both. The honest spirit of his Prince relaxed from its prejudices, but Parliament, turned out of its habit and course, never was cordial to him, yet it dared not to check him in his career of glory and of usefulness. This saved the Minister a world of trouble, and it did his country a world of good. But as this pleaded necessity of Ministerial influence vitiates Parliament, and turns it into a direction contrary to its genius, so it is of the most dangerous

dangerous tendency in another view, which has never, I believe, been adverted to. The power in the House of Commons of impeaching a bad Minister, whose crimes no other form of justice can reach, has ever been remarked as one of the happiest guards of our Constitution. But this power is a mere nullity in the present management and habit of Parliament. Master of Parliament, what has the Minister to fear? Will the servant raise his voice against his bountiful Lord? Will the injured and insulted People find a protector, an avenger in the confederate of the Minister's crime? Nor will a change of administration revive the avenging genius of the constitution. Ministers standing in the same predicament, and having the same to fear for themselves, will have a tender sympathy for each other, nor will a Parliament, still disposed to corruption, throw discredit on the trade by the punishment of its past corrupters.

He concluded with hoping better of the future prosperity than some of its wisest and best friends dared to flatter themselves with. But nothing assuredly could affect this, unless a *renewal of the Constitution*. A languid and sickly frame, either in the individual or politic body, could promise no vigorous and well prosecuted exertions. The character of the people must die with that of their government, but might still flourish with that of the revival. The ruin, from whose brink it was so frightful to look down, had issued from the abuses which the Petition wished to rectify. And as England, previous to the existence of her colonies, had risen to her height of greatness, from the inexhausted resources of her free and manly government, she might, from the same actuating spirit, repossess and maintain her rank among nations. All depended upon the virtue of the People.

Lord Surrey closed the debates with an address, which conveyed singular satisfaction to every hearer. He apologized for addressing the Meeting at all, as indeed, he was not a Freeholder of the county; but he trusted, that the honour of a long connection with the county from residence and property, which his family had enjoyed, would excuse him; that he should not be deemed an intruder in presenting himself before them, in expressing his warmest approbation of the measure, though a sense of propriety repelled him from signing the petition. It afforded him the highest pleasure to behold a perfect unanimity on so important a subject, but the business ought not to rest with their present act; they would but partially serve the cause in which they had so laudably engaged, if they did not accompany their individual signatures with their most active exertions. They must address themselves to their countrymen, persuade, exhort, inform, and use every honest means to give weight to their Petition in Parliament, by procuring to it a large and general approbation. They were not to flatter themselves, that it would not be opposed, the face of unanimity in the present Meeting should not inspire in them a dangerous security. It would be opposed, powerfully opposed; not only by those from whom nothing better was to be expected, by the friends and supporters, in and out of Parliament, of the late ruinous administration; but he was sorry to add, by some of the most respectable characters, who had hitherto been the fast friends of the People and the Constitution, and whose opinions would derive a weight from the reverence which their past conduct had won them. Whether they were warped by an interest in those boroughs, which might be affected by the Petition, or a tenaciousness of certain speculative notions which they had adopted, he would not decide, as they

were not present to answer for themselves; but such were the opponents whom they were to resist, and resist with all the force of argument and solicitation. He believed the county of Nottingham had not the sin of one private Borough to answer for; he wished it were equally free from all imputation of corruption and vitiating influence; but if gentlemen thought differently from the Petitioners, he wished they had been present to have urged their objections. The Meeting was in the face of day, and of the county, and this would have become them as men and Citizens. The Reform was necessary in a striking view, as not only Lords and Ministers, and Asiatic plunderers, might invade the appropriated *Rights of the People*, but even a King of France might, at the price of five thousand pounds a borough, send Representatives of himself to the Commons House, and command an ascendancy in a British Parliament. The practicability of such daring outrages issued from the horrid state of Representation. If the Electors of every Borough consisted in a number of *British Freemen*, such attempts would not even be conceived. He praised Lord Galway for the disinterestedness of his conduct, in being superior to the temptations of his Borough interest, when the interests of his country called for his approbation and support. If in the issue of the business he should be thrown on the affections of his country for a seat in Parliament, which at present he held as by his own right, a grateful country could not fail to make every handsome return. He concluded with recommending the subject of the Petition to their best affections; there was a spirit and vigour in the Constitution, which, as the last speaker had observed, would awe even the Legislature in great occasions; and if the People, with a firm and manly tone, called for **JUSTICE, THEY MUST OBTAIN IT!**

York Tavern, Oct. 31, 1782.

At a Meeting of the Committee of Association for the County of York,
Rev. Mr. WYVILL, Chairman.

The following Address to the Freeholders of the County of York was unanimously agreed to:

Whereas at a General Meeting of the County of York, held by adjournment at York, on the 28th day of March, 1780, for the purpose of adopting A PLAN OF ASSOCIATION, it was resolved,—That the said Meeting should be further adjourned, subject to a call by the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION:

They whose names are hereunto prefixed, being Members of the said Committee, assembled in York this day, do by virtue of the aforesaid power invested in them, earnestly request the Freeholders of the said County to meet at the Assembly Rooms in York, on the 19th of December next, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, in order to receive an abridged report of the whole Proceedings of the said Committee since their original appointment; and also to take into their mature consideration the necessity of presenting a Petition to Parliament during the course of the next sessions, for a Redress of that fundamental grievance, the **UNEQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE**, and other important matters respecting the **REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT.**

A Report

A Report of the Proceedings of the COMMITTEE of ASSOCIATION, (appointed at the adjourned GENERAL MEETING of the County of YORK, held on the 28th day of March, 1780,) presented to the GENERAL MEETING of the County of YORK, held on the 19th day of December, 1782.

The adjourned General Meeting of the County of York, held on the 28th day of March, 1780, having entered into an ASSOCIATION, in order to promote, by their joint assistance, in a pacific way, the obtaining of,

1. One or more Bills to correct profusion in the EXPENDITURE OF PUBLIC MONEY, to regulate the manner of making Public Contracts, and the mode of keeping and passing Public Accounts; to reduce exorbitant Emoluments of Office, and to REFORM THE ABUSES OF SINECURE PLACES AND PENSIONS, unmerited by public Service.

2. A Bill to establish greater EQUALITY IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT, by allowing the several Counties of the kingdom of Great-Britain to elect, in due proportion, one hundred knights at least, in addition to the present number :

3. A Bill to SHORTEN THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS to a term not exceeding three years;

And having empowered the Committee of sixty-one Gentlemen, appointed at a former Meeting of the County, together with Sir William St. Quintin, Sir W. Anderson, Mr. T. Weddell, Dr. Swainston, or any twenty-one of them, to act as a COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION, to add to their number, and to take such legal and Constitutional measures, as to them might appear most expedient, for promoting the object of their Association :

The COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION, in pursuance of that appointment, held their first Meeting on the 29th of March, 1780, added several Members to the Committee, and appointed a Standing Sub-Committee for the purpose of Correspondence, by letter, during the adjournments of the Committee.

On the 15th of April, 1780, the Committee called together by the Sub-Committee, under the authority granted to them by a Resolution of the Committee on the 29th of March, voted thanks to John Dunning, Esq. and Thomas Pitt, Esq. for their respective motions in the House of Commons on the 6th of April, 1780, affirming the actual existence of the grievances complained of by the Petitions of the People, and asserting the right and duty of that House to provide immediate and effectual redress.

On the 3d of May, 1780, the Committee met according to their adjournment on the 29th of March, and passed Resolutions, thanking those Members of both Houses of Parliament, who had uniformly opposed the coercion of America to unconditional submission; also those Members of the House of Commons, who supported the Bill for preventing certain Officers of the Revenue from voting at any future Election of Members of Parliament; and also the forty-one Lords who supported the Contractors' Bill; at the same time censuring his Majesty's Ministers, who, by the rejection of that Bill in the House of Lords, had manifested their determination to preserve entire that UNCONSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE OF THE CROWN, which the House of

of Commons had declared ought to be diminished; and also voting that Minister to be an enemy to the liberties of his country, who should advise his Majesty to prorogue or dissolve the Parliament, until the House of Commons should have fulfilled their promise to the People, to correct the abuses complained of in their Petitions.

On the 2d of August, 1780, the Committee met by a call of the Sub-Committee, at a period when the nation, dismayed by the abominable riots of the populace in London, appeared sinking into despondence, and disposed tamely to submit to the unprecedented order to the military force to interfere, for the suppression of tumults, *at their discretion, without the direction of the civil Magistrate*; and when the enemies of the Constitution had laboured, with too great success, to obstruct the efforts of the counties, &c. for obtaining a *Redress of Public Grievances*, by defaming their pacific Associations, as meetings calculated to produce similar acts of violence. On this critical and unfortunate emergency, the Committee having repulsed those defamatory attacks, and vindicated the legal views of their Association, proceeded to censure the order for disarming peaceable Protestant subjects, as contrary to the known law of the land; and the order for the interference of the army throughout the kingdom, for suppressing illegal Assemblies of the People at their sole discretion, when no pressing danger actually existed, and when no reluctance appeared in the magistracy to do their duty, as a dangerous precedent, not to be justified on any real ground of necessity; and the Committee having exhorted their Fellow Citizens to persevere in an orderly support of their LEGAL ASSOCIATIONS, recommended to all substantial house-holders to be ready, on the first appearance of any riotous commotion, to assist in maintaining peace and good order, under the directions of the civil Magistrate.

On the 3d of August, 1780, the Committee requested Mr. Burke to present again, in the next Session of Parliament, his Bill for the better regulation of his Majesty's Civil Establishment.

On the 7th of September, 1780, the Committee was called together by the Sub-Committee, on the occasion of the premature dissolution of Parliament; and the Sheriff of Yorkshire having been desired by the Sub-Committee to call a Meeting of the Freeholders of this County, in order that proper persons might be put in nomination to represent them in the ensuing Parliament, and he having declared his disapprobation of that measure, the Committee, in pursuance of the authority intrusted to them by a Resolution of the County Meeting, held on the 28th of March, 1780, did resolve to call a Meeting of the Freeholders of Yorkshire on the 14th of Sept. 1780, for the purpose aforesaid; and returned thanks to Sir George Savile for his manly address to his Constituents on the 5th of September, and for his faithful service in Parliament.

On the 28th of September, 1780, the Committee resolved to nominate Deputies on the 3d of January, 1781, to attend the proposed General Meeting of Deputies in London.

On the 3d of January, 1781, the Committee appointed the Reverend Christopher Wyvill, Samuel Shore, Esq. and Sir James Norcliffe, their Deputies, with power to meet and confer with the Deputies from other Counties, &c. and to concur with them in an application to Parliament, for correcting the *gross abuses in the Public Expenditure, and for reducing the undue Influence of the Crown*, complained of by the Petition of this County to the last Parliament; and also to move the Meeting of Deputies

ties aforesaid, to endeavour to obtain a more adequate *Representation of the People*, by the introduction of at least one hundred additional County Members : but the Committee left it to the discretion of their Deputies to determine, as circumstances might arise in the course of their conference, whether a motion for shortening the duration of Parliaments to a term not exceeding *three years*, would then be prudent and advisable, or premature, inconvenient, and fit to be postponed to a future Session of Parliament ; most strictly confining them to support those propositions of the ASSOCIATION by orderly means alone, by dutiful application to Parliament, or by such other prudential measures as might be perfectly consistent with law and the Constitution : and the Committee, anxious to obviate every artful suggestion which might be employed to calumniate their design in the said appointment of Deputies, not only submitted to general inspection their instructions to their Deputies, but also stated, in a full and explicit address to the Electors of Great Britain, their views of *Public Reformation*, and the reasons of their conduct for promoting that necessary work ; and exhorting the Counties, &c. who concurred in those political sentiments, to co-operate with the Committee in the proposed General Deputation, they expressed their confidence, that, in the general wreck which threatened the fortunes of the Public, their vigorous and timely interposition might yet preserve the *Liberty and the Constitution of Britain*.

On the 4th of January, 1781, the Committee thanked the ARMED ASSOCIATION of the city of York, for their resolute and well-timed exertions in support of the laws of their country, during the unprovoked riots which immediately followed the last Election for the County ; requested David Hartley, Esq. to permit the publication of his excellent Address to them, dated January the 3d, 1781 ; and resolved to transmit it, with their recommendation, to the other Committees throughout the kingdom.

On the 9th of May, 1781, the Deputies reported to the Committee the result of their conference with the Deputies of other Associated Bodies ; viz. that a Petition was presented from the General Deputation to the House of Commons, on behalf of themselves and others, their fellow-subjects, who, jointly with them in the last session of the late Parliament, had petitioned that Honourable House, that some remedy might be provided against the *unconstitutional Influence of the Crown*, and some stop might be put to the lavish expenditure of the Public Money ; entreating, both for the relief of the Subject, and the safety of the Constitution, that Honourable House would proceed to enquire by what means these alarming grievances might be redressed : that the concurrence of the General Meeting, in the propositions for a REFORM OF PARLIAMENT, adopted by the County of York, was obtained ; but neither the Nobles nor the House of Representatives, having at that time appeared sufficiently favourable to this PLAN OF REFORM, nor the People themselves having supported the General Deputation with sufficient vigour, it was found necessary to postpone that arduous task to a more favourable, but, they trusted, not a very distant season. The Committee having approved the conduct of their Deputies, voted thanks to Sir George Savile, Mr. Dunning, and Mr. H. Duncombe, for their ready attention and support to the Petition of the General Deputation, and exhorted their fellow-subjects to persevere, without remission, in pursuit of the objects of the ASSOCIATION.

On the 10th of May, 1781, the Committee thanked Sir George Savile, in terms of peculiar approbation; for having attended Parliament, notwithstanding a very precarious state of health, to oppose the late *scandalously extravagant loan*.

On the 17th of Oct. 1781, certain information having been received by the Committee, that the Clergy of this ASSOCIATION had been censured by high authority, and their efforts in support of the Constitution of this country treated *as foreign to the function of a Clergyman, and not the road to preferment*; the lay Members of the Committee, after asserting this undeniable truth, that a Protestant, by entering into holy orders, does not abandon his *Civil Rights*, voted thanks to those Reverend Gentlemen, who thus preferred the public good to their own private emolument. And the Committee considering, with deep regret, that their conduct, although strictly conformable to law, and uniformly directed to the support of measures, which alone can RESTORE THE CONSTITUTION, was still grossly misrepresented by men alike hostile to the *Liberties of Britain*, and unscrupulous in their mode of attacking them, resolved once more to refute those malicious cavils in a free address to their countrymen, pointing out the progress of corruption, lamenting the decline of the Constitution, and fully vindicating the proposed means for its RESTORATION. In their apprehension, to rectify a disordered Legislature, must indeed be a work of the greatest toil and difficulty; but there is yet, in the independent part of the community, a fund of vigour adequate to the task, and the ancient spirit of the Constitution still affords unexhausted resources for a lawful, orderly, and effectual interposition; far, therefore, from wishing to promote confusion, or to prompt their *Fellow Citizens* to deeds of violence and desperation, they exhorted them, with conscientious sincerity, to confine their efforts within bounds of legality: but within those bounds resolutely to oppose that system of PARLIAMENTARY CORRUPTION, which is alike the bane of national morality, and the ruin of public Liberty.

On the 4th of April, 1782, the Committee thanked the independent majority of the Commons House of Parliament, who, on the 27th of February last, reprobated the farther prosecution of offensive war on the Continent of North America, for the purpose of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience by force; expressed the fullest confidence in those avowed opponents of corruption, with whom, on the consequent dismissal of the late profuse and dangerous Administration, the powers of Government had been entrusted; but conceiving the task of Government, in that moment, to be arduous, beyond the difficulty experienced in any former period, they resolved to postpone to the 31st of October, calling a General Meeting of the county of York, in order to submit to their Constituents the necessity of presenting a Petition to Parliament in the next session, for a redress of that fundamental grievance, the *unequal Representation of the People in Parliament*.

On the 31st of October, 1782, the Committee resolved to request the Freeholders of the county of York, to meet for the consideration of that important measure, on the 19th of December, 1782.

In this abridged narrative every material step taken by the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION, in pursuance of the trust committed to them by the county of York, has been related; and they are happy to lay this brief, but full account of their transactions before the county on this occasion; when, they trust, they shall not be thought to have post-

postponed too long the surrender of their Delegated Powers, or to have been disinclined to submit their conduct to the judgment of their Constituents; faults which would merit peculiar blame in men who so severely reprobate the septennial duration of Parliament. For more than two years they have laboured in the prosecution of that political Reform which was pointed out by the county, as the object of their commission. On every proper opportunity it has been their zealous endeavour to promote the wishes of their constituents, by expressing their gratitude to those distinguished senators, by whom the public cause was promoted, by passing votes of censure on those men by whom it was obstructed; by recommending to the nation, in repeated addresses, to support the demand of Reformation; stating the profusion of the Public Expenditure, the propriety of an æconomical retrenchment, and the urgent necessity of an effectual correction of the abuses in the frame and duration of Parliament, and also by appointing Deputies, instructed, in concurrence with the General Deputation, to petition the House of Commons for a *redress of those great National Grievances*.

Such was the purpose for which this County was first assembled, and **RESOLVED TO ASSOCIATE**; and such have been the efforts of this Committee for the attainment of that end. If the end itself be laudable, the means surely must be deemed unexceptionable. In times of danger to the Constitution, popular combinations are the proper and the only effectual means to defend it: and although men, who profess much concern for order and regularity, while they discover little regard for the *rights and privileges of the nation*, may dislike all assemblies of the People, yet the Committee trust that, in their exertions, the strictest examination, by men most averse to popular Meetings, will not be able to point out the smallest breach of any duty prescribed by the laws of the country: they shall be little apprehensive of censure on other ground, if their conduct shall merit the approbation of this Assembly, as having been faithfully directed to public good, according to the intention of their original appointment.

The Committee cannot close this report, consistently with their duty to this county and to the public, without declaring their sentiments remain unaltered, that a melioration of Parliament, on the principles of the Association, must be obtained, or the *Liberty of Britain* cannot long be preserved; for although something has been laudably done for the purposes of æconomical retrenchment, and lessening the excessive influence of the Crown, yet the best official regulations may soon be set aside, the wisest and most virtuous Ministers may soon be displaced, by the prevalence of that corrupt interest which still subsists in the House of Commons, which its defective frame naturally generates, and which has already so nearly effected the ruin of this unhappy country.

A Copy of the CIRCULAR LETTER, which, at the last Meeting of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for this county, was ordered to be sent by their Chairman, the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, to the Chairman of the several other Petitioning and Associating Bodies, and such other friends to the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT, as he should think fit.

Burton-Hall, near Bedal, Nov. 1, 1781.

SIR,

I am directed by the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for the County of York, to transmit to you the inclosed account of their proceedings

ceedings on this day, and the 31st of October, which they request you will have the goodness to lay before the Committee of _____, at its next meeting.

I am also instructed to mention how much the Yorkshire Committee wish to obtain a free communication of sentiments with the Committee of _____, on the subject of *Parliamentary Abuses*, hoping, by their opinion and advice, to be enabled to judge what propositions, for the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT, it may be expedient to recommend to the intended General Meeting of the county of York, on the 19th day of December next.

The Yorkshire Committee have seen, with much satisfaction, Petitions adopted by several *Public Meetings* of great respectability, requesting, in *general terms*, A REDRESS OF PARLIAMENTARY GRIEVANCES; they approve this respect and deference to Parliament, and with a similar delicacy may be observed in the measures of the county of York: but it seems to be advisable, that this *general petition* of the People should be supported by some *particular declaration* of their wishes, in a mode as little offensive as possible to the dignity of Parliament; for should it not be known on what grounds, and to what extent the people desire that the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT may proceed, it may be foreseen that hence insuperable objections will be urged against every plan of reformation, which their friends in Parliament may propose. INSTRUCTIONS from each Constituent Body to their respective Representatives, seem to be the most obvious and unexceptionable mode, by which Parliament may be apprised what correction of abuses is expected by the People, and yet every appearance of disrespect to that assembly may be entirely avoided.

If this method of conveying the sense of the nation to Parliament, and ascertaining *what reformation there* would give general satisfaction, should be approved, the next important consideration would be, what particular propositions of REFORM, in the present state of this country, are most eligible; and, if proposed in the INSTRUCTIONS of any Constituent Body, are most likely to receive the general concurrence of the public; for if too extensive a system of REFORMATION should be rashly obtruded on Parliament, the whole attempt might miscarry, and the opportunity to secure the LIBERTIES OF BRITAIN for generations to come, might be irretrievably lost. But on the other hand, every friend to the Constitution would lament the loss of superior improvement, if, from too rigid a scruple, to extend the terms of the Association, the additional Representation of the counties and the metropolis should be alone procured, when the abolition of the MOST OBJECTIONABLE BOROUGHs, in a limited degree, might have been obtained. In the opinion of the Yorkshire Committee, the little decayed boroughs, dependant on, or unduly influenced by, the Boards of Ordnance, Treasury, Admiralty, &c. may be justly placed in that class. For what more dangerous perversion of the Constitution can be imagined, than THE NOMINATION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BY THE CROWN; or what fidelity to the public trust can be expected from Senators, who are thus created by that Government, whose conduct they ought to watch and controul?

On this occasion, the Yorkshire gentlemen are free to own their inclination, if the proposal should fortunately meet the approbation of the Committee of _____, and other respectable Bodies, to recommend

mend to the General Meeting of the county of York, on the 19th of December:

1. To instruct their Representatives to introduce, or to support a Bill in Parliament, for abolishing at least fifty of the MOST OBNOXIOUS BOROUGHES; providing for the Electors in the several boroughs abolished, a proper gratuitous compensation for their extinguished franchises; and enabling them to vote, together with the Freeholders, in elections for Knights of the respective shires to which they belong; and also adding an adequate number of Members, not less than an hundred, in a due proportion to the several counties and the metropolis:

2. And farther to instruct their Representatives to move, or to support a motion for the repeal of the Septennial Bill:

3. Also the admitting proprietors of copyhold lands of inheritance, with fine certain, of the clear yearly value of forty shillings, to vote at county elections of Members of Parliament throughout the kingdom:

4. And lastly, to support the application of any county in Scotland, for setting aside nominal and fictitious votes, and for regulating Elections to Parliament in that part of the kingdom, in a manner agreeable to the true intent and spirit of the Constitution.

On the subject of the two last articles of REFORM, the Yorkshire Committee are little apprehensive that any considerable variation of sentiment will be found among the true friends of the Constitution—still less can they suppose that, to the proposition for the repeal of the Septennial Bill, any material objection will be urged; but if the proposal for a limited disfranchisement of the most obnoxious boroughs should not receive the approbation and concurrence of a decided majority of the counties and principal towns, which support the claim of Parliamentary Reformation, the Yorkshire Committee will not hesitate a moment to sacrifice their wishes to the preservation of that harmony and union among the several Associated and Petitioning Bodies, without which, there cannot be a probability of success. In that case they will readily strike out the article for the abolition of certain boroughs, and recommend to the General Meeting of the county of York, to adhere in their instructions to the second proposition in their form of Association, for reinforcing the sound part of our representation, by the addition of *one hundred Members*, to be proportionably chosen by the counties and the metropolis.

The Yorkshire Committee having so freely suggested their sentiments on these important matters, do most earnestly intreat the Committee of _____, with equal freedom, to communicate their opinion and advice, which will be received with the greatest deference and respect.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most humble Servant,

C. WYVILL.

Copy of a Letter sent to the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, by order of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION of the Livery of London.

Guildhall, London, Nov. 17, 1782.

"SIR,

THE COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION of the Livery of London acceded with much pleasure to the sentiments and advice of the

Chairman of the Committee of Association for the county of York; with which they were made acquainted at the Thatched House Tavern, at a General Meeting of all the Members of Committees of the associating counties and boroughs then present in London, previous to the prorogation last summer. With great satisfaction they have found, that the county of Middlesex, city of Westminster, and other places, have also conformed strictly to the Resolutions then unanimously taken, viz. "To avoid any specific propositions relative to the PARLIAMENTARY REFORM."

"The wisdom of such general application, as well as the great respect which this Committee entertain for the gentlemen of the Yorkshire Committee, and the earnest desire of union and harmony, forbid them in any manner to mention or bring forward any particular plan or proposition.

"This Committee hope for a mature and well-digested REFORM OF PARLIAMENT, which they trust will proceed from the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons. And they beg leave to propose to the Committee of York, the propriety of suspending or postponing instructions to their Representatives, until the fate of the General Petitions is decided.

I have the honour to be, with great respect,

SIR,

Your most obedient, and most humble Servant,

BRASS CROSBY, Chairman.

Rev. Mr. Wyvill, Chairman of the Yorkshire Committee.

The following is a Copy of the Answer sent by the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, to Mr. Alderman CROSBY, Chairman of the Committee of the Livery of London.

Burton-hall, Dec. 7, 1782.

"SIR,

"I am happy that my political conduct at any time has been honoured with the approbation of the Committee of the Livery of London. But I cannot flatter myself that the part I took in the transactions at the Thatched House in May last, deserved any peculiar commendation; or that opinions delivered there by so humble an individual, possessed that weight and influence, which the Committee are pleased to ascribe to them. On the other hand, I trust I shall be able to satisfy the Committee, that their disapprobation of my conduct in a recent instance, which I observe, with much concern, conveyed in the same letter which has bestowed upon me such unmerited praise, is founded on a mistaken view of my sentiments and actions.

"I do admit, Sir, that at the Thatched House, I did object, with some respectable gentlemen of other counties, in a vote of thanks to the Duke of Richmond, in all the various shapes in which it was offered to the Meeting. To me, who hold his Grace in high respect, as a firm and intrepid assertor of our free Constitution, this was a painful opposition. But in my conception, public duty bound me to oppose the respective motions for that purpose; not because his Grace was the proposer of a specific plan for the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT, but because his specific plan appeared to me impracticable, and not to be attained

attained by any regular or Constitutional efforts of the people; and therefore any resolution of thanks which might be construed by the public, as a declaration in favour of his Grace's system, could only tend to defeat that more safe and moderate proposal for restoring the Constitution, which their peaceful endeavours might probably obtain. In this opposition, the worthy members of the corporation of London then present, generally concurred; by their influence the several motions were withdrawn; and consequently, it became unnecessary to urge any farther objections against the plan itself, considered with respect to its utility in the present circumstances of this country. I do admit also, that although no formal resolution was passed upon the subject, yet it was agreed at the Thatched House, and I concurred in the agreement, that it was expedient the intended petition for the redress of our *Parliamentary Grievances* should be drawn up in general terms. But I certainly did not bind myself "to avoid any specific propositions relative to the PARLIAMENTARY REFORM," in any other mode of declaration, whenever a proper degree of union upon the subject could be accomplished. And I do not find the other Yorkshire Gentlemen, who had been present at the Thatched House, understood this agreement in a different manner. At the late Meeting of the Yorkshire Committee, several of those gentlemen attended; and to their recollection the objection did not occur, when the circular letter was proposed.

"In my opinion, the want of unanimity among the agents of the people, in favour of any specific plan, is the unfortunate circumstance which threatens most their total disappointment. For if no means can be devised to unite the body of the people in support of some rational and substantial improvement of the Constitution, their continued dissensions, no doubt, will furnish to the timid or interested obstructors of REFORMATION, a ready answer to their petition: "Why should Parliament admit a change, till it is known what change will satisfy the nation? When the people themselves are agreed what redress they ought to ask, then, and not before, let Parliament deliberate what redress they ought to grant." It is obvious indeed, that till that general UNION OF THE PEOPLE shall take place, discordant petitions, recommending to Parliament different specific plans of REFORMATION, would but expose the People to the derision of their adversaries. But it behoves their agents to consider, that no time should be lost, no endeavours should be unemployed, to conciliate and to unite the various *Friends of Reformation*, before the season for that work be irrecoverably past. At length the whirl of casual events has brought on the favourable opportunity; but if they omit to improve the fleeting advantage, a few short months may frustrate every future attempt to retrieve their neglect. "The Committee of London hope for a mature and well-digested *Reform of Parliament*; which they trust will proceed from the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons." I freely own my hopes are placed upon a different foundation, viz. on the firmness and energy of the British People, pointing out the principle of that Reformation which they request; specifying the extent to which they desire it may proceed, and leaving the minute detail of Reformation to be settled by Parliament itself: but if the late overture of the Yorkshire Committee, and every other attempt to accomplish a more general UNION OF THE PEOPLE, for the prosecution of some specific plan of REFORMATION of equal extent, should prove unsuccessful, it may be expected that any correction of Parliamentary abuses, which may flow from the spontaneous act and pleasure of Parliament, will be much

much inferior to that plan of Constitutional improvement, which the Yorkshire gentlemen have proposed. In my apprehension any change that may be made, will also originate with less propriety, and in point of precedent with less safety from Parliament, than from the specific applications of the people, by instructions to their respective Members. Such were my sentiments before the meeting of the Thatched House; and they remain unaltered since, by conversation or correspondence.

"The general phrase is, *that something must be done.*" What probably will be done, may, perhaps, in some measure, be collected from that message which I had the honour to receive from Lord Shelburne, in Aug. last; the purport of which was soon after communicated to the Committee of London. His Lordship undoubtedly stands pledged to support the propositions of the Yorkshire Association; that is, to promote the addition of one hundred Members to the counties and the metropolis, and the repeal of the Septennial Bill.

"But if Petitions, in general terms alone shall be presented to Parliament, and no instructions shall be offered to our several Representatives for the amputation of rotten boroughs, I see no reason to suppose that any abolition of their obnoxious franchises will take place against the manifest interest of many powerful Members of Parliament; except by the slow operations of a Parliamentary tribunal in some rare instance, disfranchising an unfortunate borough on proof of corruption too flagrant to be dissembled. I am far from meaning to disparage the measure for reinforcing the sound part of our Representation: if nothing better can be obtained, I shall be thankful even for that additional security to our freedom. But I am convinced that an adequate abolition of the little decayed boroughs would strongly corroborate that security; and I conceive that both might yet be accomplished by a timely and vigorous exertion of the people for those special purposes. With these impressions on my mind, I attended the late meeting of the Yorkshire Committee, and having produced to that assembly, a copy of the message from Lord Shelburne, and stated to them my subsequent correspondence on that subject with his Lordship, which appeared at once to confirm the message, and to be improper for public inspection at that time; my production of the correspondence in question was not required by the Committee. But it was not my advice to the Committee to acquiesce in these declarations of support from Lord Shelburne. At the Thatched House meeting I had opposed thanking the Duke of Richmond for his impracticable plan; at the Yorkshire meeting I exhorted the Committee not to content themselves with the mere augmentation of county members, &c. which the Cabinet seemed disposed to promote; but as far as it is possible, without risking that acquisition, to attempt the still superior improvement of an adequate amputation of the little decayed boroughs. What I ventured to suggest on this occasion was honoured with the approbation of that respectable assembly, and was carried into effect in the circular letter; which the Committee of London has already seen.

"From this explanation of my political conduct and sentiments for some time past, I trust I shall be justified in that opinion of the Committee, as having acted, in circumstances of some difficulty, an honest and a consistent part. But this is a matter comparatively of small moment. I am confident from this state of some late transactions, whatever the final determination of that Committee may be on the subject of the circular letter, they will approve the caution, the perseverance, the well-tempered zeal of the Yorkshire Committee. With respect to the pro-

propriety of "postponing instructions to their Representatives, until the fate of the general petitions is decided," which your respective Committee proposes to that of Yorkshire, I would beg leave to suggest one short observation; which is, That when the fate of the Petition shall be decided, any instructions upon the subject will probably come to late. If in consequence of an application *in general terms* to Parliament, the representation of the counties and the metropolis shall be reinforced by the addition of fifty or sixty Members, any future application to the legislature for farther improvement, in this age at least, cannot, with any probability, be expected to receive the countenance and support of the nation. If therefore the Committee of London have no objection to the propositions offered by the Yorkshire gentlemen, their concurrence now can alone be of any avail. If they decline giving their sanction to that proposal, from a preference to the Duke of Richmond's scheme, I beg leave to declare my firm opinion, as I did before at the Thatched House meeting, that there exists not the smallest probability, that his Grace's plan will be adopted by the towns and counties of Great-Britain in any considerable proportion.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant

C. WYVILL."

Brass Crosby, Esq. Chairman, &c.

YORK COUNTY MEETING.

AT a General Meeting of the County of York, the 19th of December, 1782, upon a call by the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for that county, pursuant to the power intrusted to them by the Meeting of the 28th day of March, 1780,

The report of the past proceedings of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION was presented by the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, their Chairman;

And a motion being made, and the question put, that such Report be now read,

It passed in the affirmative; and the same was read accordingly.

A motion being made and seconded, and the question put, that the following Petition to Parliament be read, it passed in the affirmative, and the same was read accordingly, viz.

To the Honourable the COMMONS of Great-Britain, in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of the FREEHOLDERS of the county of YORK,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, sensible of the original excellency of the Constitution of this country, most ardently wish to have it maintained upon the genuine principles on which it was founded.

Your Petitioners further sheweth, that it is necessary to the welfare of the People, that the Commons House of Parliament should have a common interest with the nation; and that in the present state of the representation of the People in Parliament, the House of Commons do not sufficiently speak the voice of the People.

Your

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray this Honourable House to take into their most serious consideration, the present inadequate state of the *Representation of the People in Parliament*, and to apply such remedy to this great and alarming evil, as to this Honourable House may seem meet.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

A motion then being made and seconded, and the question put, Resolved unanimously, That this Petition be adopted, and do pass as the act of this meeting.

The several motions following were afterwards successively made and seconded, and the question being put upon each, it was

Resolved unanimously, That this Meeting having adopted a Petition, requesting a REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT IN GENERAL TERMS, and being apprehensive, that from the generality of the Petition, the inattention of this Meeting may be misconstrued, as aiming at a Reformation of Parliament on principles, and to an extent which they do not mean to recommend, doth find it necessary to declare, that if,

1. A Bill should be passed in Parliament for abolishing at least fifty of the most obnoxious boroughs, providing for the electors in the several boroughs abolished a proper gratuitous compensation for their extinguished franchises; and enabling them to vote, together with other Freeholders, in elections for Knights of the respective shires to which they belong; and also adding an adequate number of Members, not less than an hundred, in due proportion to the several counties and the metropolis:

2. And if the Septennial Bill shall be repealed:

3. And if a Bill shall be passed for admitting proprietors of copyhold lands of inheritance, with fine certain, of the clear yearly value of forty shillings, to vote at county elections of Members of Parliament throughout the kingdom:

4. And lastly, if a Bill should be passed for setting aside nominal and fictitious votes in Scotland, and for regulating Elections in Parliament in that part of the kingdom, in a manner agreeable to the true intent and spirit of the Constitution:

The correction of Parliamentary Abuses, effected by those measures, will establish a REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT which this county would highly approve.

Resolved unanimously, That this Meeting, trusting in the experienced zeal of their Representatives, Sir Geo. Savile, Bart. and Henry Duncombe, Esq. as far as circumstances will allow to promote the reasonable wishes of their constituents, to accomplish a substantial REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT, as aforesaid, and to support further measures of strict frugality, so indispensibly necessary in the present condition of this country, doth postpone offering to their worthy Representatives any instructions on the said matters.

Resolved unanimously, That the Chairman be directed to communicate the preceding resolutions to Sir George Savile and Mr. Henry Duncombe; and at the same time, in strong terms, to express to them this Meeting's grateful sense of their faithful and disinterested services in Parliament; and also to acquaint Sir George Savile with what regret the intimation of his absence from this Meeting, occasioned by severe indisposition, was received by his constituents, and with what sincerity they wish the re-establishment of his health.

Resolved

Resolved unanimously, That the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION be re-appointed, with its former powers.

Resolved unanimously, That this Meeting is fully sensible of the benefits which will accrue to the nation from the salutary and economical Bills of Reform, which were passed in the last session of Parliament; which Reform, it trusts, will be persevered in until the grievances complained of in the former Petition of this county are completely redressed.

W. CHALONER, Chairman.

ACCOUNT OF DEBATES, &c. AT THE COUNTY MEETING.

Mr. Chaloner being called to the Chair, opened the business by reading the public advertisement; Mr. Wyvill then rose, and moved that the report of the proceedings of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION be read, which being done by the Chairman, Mr. Wyvill addressed the Meeting to the following purport:

Mr. Chairman,

It cannot have escaped your observation, that in the narrative which has been read to this respectable audience, the Committee have reported some resolutions which bear no immediate relation to the objects of their commission. But, they trust, no apology to their constituents will be thought necessary for acts of self-defence in the Committee, or acts of justice to their injured associates; without which, the honour and credit of the *Association* itself could not have been preserved entire.

If, on the first glance, their censure of the discretionary orders to the military force should be thought an exceptionable measure, on a little farther reflection, the absolute necessity of it will be apparent. For every legal effort to improve the Constitution, while all law and the Constitution lay at the mercy of an army ordered to act at their discretion, must have been vain and nugatory.

In consequence of that honest vote of Parliament, prohibiting hostilities for the subjugation of America, the dismissal of a hated Administration became unavoidable, and the powers of government were entrusted to men, in whose wisdom, integrity, and inviolable attachment to the Constitution the nation justly confided. By those zealous opponents of a corrupt system of government, regulations were instantly established, enforcing public frugality, diminishing the excessive influence of the Crown, and tending, in some degree, to restore the purity and *Independence of Parliament*. The upright Ministers, whose promise of those beneficial measures had been so faithfully performed, amply merited that universal applause which has been so cordially given them.

But to its own integrity and zeal, to its own vigour and perseverance in the generous struggle for LIBERTY, the public stands principally indebted. And if this Committee, acting in concert with other reputed bodies, may be thought to have promoted this salutary Revolution, far from assuming any praise themselves, they are proud to acknowledge the efficacy and success of their exertions must be wholly ascribed to the weight and influence of this great county, by which they have been so nobly supported.

In the common joy on that happy change of counsels, and on the consequent correction of those abuses which had excited general indig-

R

nation,

nation, the Committee sincerely partake. But while they congratulate this assembly on the advantages already gained, truth and duty to the public, unmingled with any meaner purpose to disparage those achievements, oblige them to declare their deliberate judgment, that no solid and permanent security for the *Rights of the Nation* has yet been obtained. If that beginning of Reformation be not followed up, and sustained by some more durable improvement of the Constitution, short will be the exultation of the public, and transient will be the benefits derived from those salutary regulations: for near a century bitter experience has proved, that, constituted as it now is, the House of Commons is not proof against corruption. A corrupt House of Commons can be no check on the prodigality of Administration; and therefore, without a melioration of Parliament, on the principles of the ASSOCIATION, the same ruinous system of Government, under which we have already suffered so much, must be expected to prevail again.

It is true, the Minister of Corruption has found, that in the hour of national calamity, his accustomed arts were of little avail; at that critical period, his less hardy adherents were struck with remorse at the wild havock made by their assistance in this dismembered empire: they dreaded the rising discontent of the People, and shrunk from the support of an odious Administration.

The Cornish Burgesses, the Cinque Port Barons, and the rest of the faithful band returned by the little venal boroughs, were found unequal to the task of Ministerial defence.—Against that *mercenary tribe* the Representatives of the counties and principal towns, backed by a large majority of the kingdom, had hitherto contended ineffectually, but, on the near approach of ruin, their zeal, their unanimity prevailed, and Parliament exerted the long neglected power of controul.

But can it be forgotten that even this tardy interposition depended on a multitude of contingencies, without whose casual combination the British People might yet have been groaning, without a prospect of relief, under the complicated misery of a corrupt Administration, and a war of ambition, for the forcible subjugation of their American Brethren! In conformity to the spirit of that Parliamentary restriction, measures tending to a pacification with the Colonies have been negotiated, that independence has been provisionally acknowledged, and hostilities are now continued, not for the conquest of America, but for the purpose of defence alone, against a host of European enemies, leagued for our destruction. In this arduous conflict, though many difficulties remain to be surmounted, Britain may yet defend her possessions, and perhaps wrest out of the hands of her ancient foes the territories she has lost. But should the struggle with the House of Bourbon be closed by a peace honourable and advantageous to the full extent of our expectations, what compensation can be made for the waste of one hundred millions of money, and the dismemberment of the empire? or what merit of parliament can hence be pleaded to bar the projected REFORMATION? In the extremity of national distress, the fears of that assembly have overpowered the influence of corruption; and after mischiefs have been permitted, which no wisdom can ever repair, the wild career of ambition has been stopped at last, when it would have been madness to go on. Is this our security against evil government? Is this the boasted superiority of our Constitution? Or is it not rather the most decisive proof of its degeneracy, and the absolute necessity for a REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT? Measures lessening the corrupt influence of Ministers, have indeed received the recent sanction

of the legislature; but if the root remain, the branches will soon shoot up again; and if a few venal electors be suffered still to place a multitude of Members as venal as themselves in the House of Commons, the disposition to venality, though checked in the hour of distress, will again predominate in that assembly, and the means of gratification, in a different mode perhaps, will be employed once more by unscrupulous Ministers with fatal success. And when extravagance, misrule, and every ruinous attempt shall be repeated by that future corrupt Administration, we shall have little reason to expect fortuitous events will again combine to save us: oppressive taxes then must soon be the ruin of industry; and the consequence of ruined industry must be emigration, national bankruptcy, the loss of LIBERTY, and the final degradation of our country. But let the purity and independence of Parliament be effectually restored, and Ministers must support their authority by very different means, by the wisdom of their measures, and a steady adherence to the interest of the community.

Under the protection of their faithful Representatives the People would be conscious of the secure enjoyment of LIBERTY; and they would be satisfied that those evils from which no Government is ever wholly exempt, would receive from the interposition of Parliament every alleviation, every mitigation which human wisdom could contrive. On the re-establishment of peace, there might then be a rational ground of hope that an Administration, at once lenient and strictly frugal, might gradually disembarass our finances, lighten the load of taxes, and re-animate the industry and drooping commerce of the community: the unrivalled power of our country may be sunk never to rise again; but let her Constitution be restored, and Britain might yet be a prosperous and happy nation.

If the danger of innovation, that unceasing obstacle to all improvement, should be here objected, this Assembly will undoubtedly guard against that hazard, whatever it may be, by the prudence and moderation of their proposition; but vague apprehensions of danger will never deter them from attempting the correction of abuses, whose existence is certain, whose ruinous effects have been recently experienced, and whose continuance must prove destructive to their dearest interests: and since these are the avowed sentiments of many of our *Fellow-Citizens*, it is the interest even of Parliament itself to admit some substantial REFORMATION; for the very existence of that assembly must be precarious when it has lost in any great degree the esteem and confidence of the People.

Happily the apparent disposition of Parliament, the declared approbation of the Cabinet, and above all, the rising spirit of the nation, afford a prospect of success. If, therefore, it should be the pleasure of the County of York to re-appoint their Committee to support an application to the House of Commons, for a more equal Representation of the People, and to shorten the duration of Parliament, their best efforts shall be employed in their service with fidelity and unremitting zeal, till by the restoration of the Constitution on the general principles of the ASSOCIATION, the *Liberty of Britain* shall be placed once more upon a solid and secure foundation.

With these sentiments, and in pursuance of the authority intrusted to them by a former Meeting of the County, the Committee have called their constituents together, to take into their consideration what measures may be proper for the redress of Parliamentary Abuses. But a war that

the task of REFORMATION is as difficult to be performed as it is necessary to be undertaken, they have previously collected every information in their power, which might assist this respectable Assembly to judge what mode of application it will be prudent to adopt. The answers from different parts of the kingdom, to their circular letter of the first of November, with few exceptions, concur in recommending a Petition in general terms: but, although the four propositions of REFORM, proposed in that letter, have been received with warm approbation by Committees and Corporations of great respect, and no disapprobation of these propositions has been expressed by any body of men friendly to the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT; yet the capital, and the counties of Suffex, Middlesex, and Huntingdon, having advised that the proposal of instructions to your members, to support those measures in Parliament, should be postponed, your Committee are of opinion that, for the preservation of union with the several Petitioning Bodies, it is expedient that instructions from this Meeting should be deferred; but not without some resolution, expressing your approbation of those articles of REFORM. The Petition which I am directed to lay before the county is therefore drawn in general terms; and I also hold in my hand two resolutions, approving the propositions of the circular letter, and postponing the measure of instructions, which will be respectively submitted to the consideration of this Assembly.

I move, Mr. Chairman, that the Petition be now read.

Mr. H. Duncombe rose to second the motion of Mr. Wyvill. He begged leave to express the satisfaction he felt at meeting his Constituents, to whom he was attached by every principle of duty and obligation, and he met them with the more satisfaction, as he trusted he had endeavoured to discharge the office they had conferred upon him with a laborious, and he hoped he might add with an honest assiduity. With respect to the propriety of the Petition, he observed, that the original excellency of the constitution of our Government could be maintained only by a due preservation of the balance of its constituent parts. The democratical part had lost much weight, and the powers of the People had greatly failed by the inequality of their Representation. Indeed, the People could not, with truth, be said to be represented, if the word representation had any meaning in the English language. We had long seen the little venal decayed boroughs represented by persons of different descriptions, to whose very names their constituents were perhaps strangers. Some wretched contractor, who went to Parliament as he went to the Alley, in the way of speculation; some Indian Governor, "rich with the spoils of plundered provinces," who purchased thereby impunity to his crimes, by a vote of ready acquiescence to every Minister and every measure, mutually supporting and supported by Ministerial delinquency. A still greater grievance prevailed, and a new species of Parliamentary influence had been introduced. The Nabob of Arcot, and the Rajah of Tanjore, he was confidently assured, had now sitting in our Parliament no less than seven or eight members, whose seats they had purchased. These Asiatic princes, rivals in power and interest, and each occasionally connected with, or opposed to the English East-India Company, have by corrupt means placed their respective Representatives in the British Senate. Nay, abuses still more alarming were to be apprehended. Was it unfair to argue, that by the same means, thought to much more fatal purposes, our natural enemies, the French, might exert the same influence, and their Monarch might seat his emissaries

faries in our House of Commons? Yet, though such was the unhappy state of our Parliamentary Representation, he derived hope and consolation from the SPIRIT AND VIRTUE OF THE PEOPLE EXERTING THEMSELVES FOR ITS REDRESS, in concert with some of the greatest characters of this age and country. We know there are several men in high stations, who, though of different parties, and discordant principles, are however united in this point—united all in the acknowledged necessity of PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION. He therefore doubted not but, by unanimity and perseverance, success might still be obtained, and hoped any additional argument was needless, to induce that meeting to support the present measure.

Mr. Stanhope rose to give his hearty approbation to the proposed Petition. He said, he had ever concurred in principle with the Association of Yorkshire, though from its particular form he did not think himself at liberty to sign it. He now derived some satisfaction from that circumstance, because it gave him an opportunity of declaring with the greatest impartiality, how firmly he approved of the measures, and how highly he applauded the zeal, the integrity, and the astonishing labours of the Yorkshire Committee in the public cause, more particularly those of their excellent Chairman. That gentleman, he observed, would not need *his* exhortation to proceed in the path he was pursuing, and whatever was the success of his labours, they would, he trusted, meet with the best of all earthly rewards—the love and approbation of his *Fellow-Citizens*.

Mr. Stanhope, now adverting to the Petition before them, said, that whoever considers the state of representation in this country, must be struck with its imperfection in a variety of instances. The Burgage Tenures, he observed, do not partake of any one quality belonging to the people. Their members have no constituents to represent or be answerable to. The only possible tie upon them is, that they are generally in the hands of the rich, who, if the country suffers, must suffer along with it. But the same observation holds with regard to the Lords, and to every opulent individual out of Parliament; whereas, a Member of the House of Commons stands not in the light of a nobleman, but rather of an attorney or agent acting for others. Some circumstances relating to these boroughs were, he said, quite insulting. There is one in the county of Sussex, near the seat of a peer, and his park-wall has six or eight black stones in it, every one of which has a vote for a Member of Parliament! If we consider the state of representation in this county, we shall find that of the thirty Members which it sends to Parliament, eighteen are sent by boroughs of private property, and of the remaining twelve many are far from being purely constituted. He thought the thanks of the Meeting were particularly due to a noble Lord (Lord Galway) then present, who had stood forward in support of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, although he was a proprietor of a borough in this county; and had declared, at the late county meeting at Nottingham, that no private consideration of his own should stand in the way of the public good.

Mr. Stanhope said, it might perhaps be urged in favour of private boroughs, that they do no harm; but our complaint against them is, that they do no good. To evince their state of mediocrity, he observed, that in the divisions upon some late interesting questions in Parliament, the Members for these boroughs balanced about equally, or as twenty-eight to twenty-nine. He then adverted to other classes of pernicious boroughs

boroughs, viz. those which for a century past have been under the influence of the First Lords of the Treasury and Admiralty, and the subject of continual contest between them and those which are wholly under the controul of the Minister. There was, he said, another description of boroughs still worse; such as carry their freedom to market, and set it at a price: these, instead of controuling their Members, are controuled by them, and the members themselves purchasing their seats as they would purchase any other property, with a view towards encreasing their wealth, have their price also, and sell themselves to Ministry. Hence it is that the Nabob of Arcot has more votes in the British House of Commons than the whole county of York; and, what is still more lamentable, this evil fights against the morals as well as the Liberties of the nation, threatening it with the fate of the Italians, who from a corrupted people became an enslaved one, and have continued so for near twenty centuries.

He said, that, taking the question in a more general point of view, admitting the House of Commons did in any degree answer the purposes of its trust, some defects might be overlooked. But had it done so? The national attention had for some years been drawn to the unfortunate American war. He believed, at its first commencement, there might be a majority for it; but for some years past there was clearly a majority of the nation against the farther prosecution of it. In the last session but one, at least four fifths of the county members opposed it, and also supported measures for checking the progress of corruption. Yet, though as considerable a majority of the people, and, he believed, of the aristocracy too, as established the succession of the Princess Sophia, were against it, the American war was persevered in, and carried on with increasing expence and misfortune, solely by dint of the undue influence of the Crown over Parliament, nor at last deserted till the unfortunate campaign of 1781. From this recent instance, it appears that Parliament, in the most pressing circumstances, has not answered the purposes of its trust: nay, it was the opinion of many, that, through the prevalence of the same influence, Lord North, the Minister whom all united to turn out, was every moment likely to be again called into power; therefore it was necessary we should persevere, and be upon our guard.

An argument had been used by some, that much had already been done. Much indeed *had* been done. The Contractors' and Revenue Officers' Bills were passed, and, through Mr. Burke's Bills, some important economical regulations had been obtained. Mr. Stanhope here made a short digression in defence of that gentleman, who, he conceived, had been more hardly thought of than he merited in the construction put upon his conduct, with respect to the supposed abandoning of part of the original object of his bills. But this was not the case: the Two White Staves, the Comptroller and Treasurer of the Household were suffered to remain, because they contribute to the splendor of the Crown, and are very ostensible places. The Ordnance was turned over to the Duke of Richmond, who suggested that Mr. Burke's regulations therein did not go far enough. Fewer places were abolished by the bill of 1782 than that of 1780, because several were intended to be struck off by the throne itself.

He begged pardon for this digression, professed himself a determined advocate for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, and repeated his former observation, THAT THE MAN WHO BOUGHT WOULD SELL: THAT THE PRICE OF A SEAT IN PARLIAMENT

WAS NOW BETTER KNOWN THAN THE PRICE OF A HORSE, and that without such a REFORM, Parliamentary representation would become a mere trade. All Ministers must have a majority, and those majorities must be bought, if they cannot be obtained by any other means. If the plan of a more equal Representation should not prevail, the abolishing places would prove rather a grievance than otherwise, because now if a man votes against the interests of his country, he is rewarded for so doing by a place. If these are abolished, he must be paid privately *under the table*, of course he becomes more dangerous, an open enemy being preferable to a secret one.

He stated one material consideration in favour of an additional county Representation, which was this: that it will emancipate the Minister from the hands of monied men; though he believed that the loans of the two last years arose from corrupt motives in the Minister; yet in general a Minister could not help himself, being in the power of monied people. The land bears the burthen of the war, and people will more cheerfully submit to that burthen, when they know it is imposed by their representatives, and not by money-jobbers.

Some persons, he observed, pay a greater regard to *authorities* than to arguments; he would therefore recur to a few authorities, illustrating the propriety and necessity of the present application for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. He then read the opinions of Lord Bacon, President Montesquieu, Mr. Locke, Lord Bolingbroke, and Mr. Justice Blackstone, on the danger of a corrupt influence prevailing in the Legislative Body, and the necessity of an equal and virtuous Representation. He also quoted the words of the great Earl of Chatham: "*That if the rotten boroughs did not drop off of themselves within the century, they must be amputated,*" and that beautiful image, used by the same noble Earl, when he mentioned the necessity of "infusing fresh health and vigour into the sound part of our Representation, by the addition of county members."

He adverted to the curious arguments used against the measure he was now enforcing, at a late Meeting of the county of Northumberland, viz. That if we called for more county members, the Ministers would call for more land-tax. This, he said, was reversing the objections against the American war. Then it was denied that taxation and representation go together. Now they cannot be separated, and we are not to be represented for fear of being taxed. The true answer to this reasoning is, "that a good Government is a cheap one, and that if we are well governed we shall not be oppressed."

It might perhaps be objected, that the present was an *improper time* to petition Parliament. Mr. Charles Townshend used to say, Petitions were improper at two seasons; the seasons of peace and the seasons of war. In peace, because they tended to disturb the general tranquility; and in war, because Ministers had sufficient employment for their abilities without being troubled with Petitions. Mr. Stanhope, however, thought this *just the proper time*: when we had felt the inconveniencies resulting from a corrupt House of Commons, it was the right moment to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of Ministers. *It was the proper time*, because the Minister solicited their support, and had pledged himself to give his assistance. The people, he observed, never got any thing from the great, but when the great stood in need of the people. He asked how Magna Charta was got?—Not in a time of peace. Finally, he exhorted that Assembly, from these considerations, to persevere in
their

their efforts, not doubting but they would be crowned with success.

Dr. Swiney, after complimenting Mr. Stanhope on the rectitude of his heart, and the goodness of his head, expressed his highest approbation of the business of the day.

Mr. Edmunds dwelt upon the present inadequate state of the Representation: rejoiced that a prospect of redress was at hand, and exhorted his countrymen to unite in a firm phalanx, and tell Parliament they **EXPECTED RELIEF, AND MUST HAVE IT**; complimented the Committee on their able and unbiassed exertions in the public cause, and spoke in terms of the highest respect of their worthy Chairman, whose conduct, he said, was above all praise. The petition, he said, was no party matter; it was neither calculated to embarrass the measures of government, nor to disturb the peace of the nation; and he hoped in God it would be crowned with the desired success.

General Hale thought proper (as his Majesty had honoured him with the command of a body of his forces, and as he was consequently in a different situation from that in which he stood when last in that room) to declare his principles. He was a most steady friend to Petitions of the People, and in that he thought himself a friend to the crown. The crown, he hoped, had now come over to the People. The interests of the former were inseparable from those of the latter. He hoped to see the Petition succeed, and to behold a free Parliament, by which the crown as well as the People will be free.

Alderman Sir Charles Turner came forward, and, with great emotion of mind, expressed, in the warmest terms, his esteem and veneration for the worthy General, whose public avowal of sentiments so pure and constitutional, situated as he was, must endear him to his fellow-citizens. Sir Charles, alluding to the ancient authorities quoted in favour of the present measure, declared that those had much less weight with him than the authority derived from the wise and upright conduct of the County of York in its late and present proceedings; and he hoped his children and grand children would prefer reading the accounts of the loyal and peaceable meetings of that county, its Committee, and their Chairman, held in that place, to studying the classics. No man, he said, could object to the Petition before them—it was moderate and respectful. Sir Charles related a conversation which he held last Friday with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He told him he was coming to meet his constituents, and asked if he should deliver any message from him respecting the melioration of Parliament. Mr. Pitt answered, “That he most certainly meant to go fully into the matter after the holidays, when he should be better informed of the sense of the People of England, and when, after the negotiations for peace now pending, he might be more at leisure to give the subject that consideration it merited.”

Mr. Hill observed, that unless the People have a real, active, and effective Representation of themselves in Parliament, they cannot, with propriety, be said to have any share in the government of this country. The privilege of the Commons' House is, that the People are to grant their own money by their own Representatives. The present Petition, therefore, does no more than repeat the petition of rights, where it says, “That no man shall be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, or tax, without the **COMMON CONSENT** by act of Parliament.” To prove that we are not duly represented, a stronger case cannot happen than that of the last general election, when, though the

the People were much discontented with their Members, yet, through the present defective frame of the House of Commons, they could do little towards the removal of those Members, or (till some time afterwards) of the Minister they had long disapproved. An honourable gentleman had remarked that Magna Charta was not obtained in the time of peace: he might have added, that the famous *Bill of Rights* was also passed upon the emergency of the case when pressing grievances existed. The æconomical Petition of this country was presented under a felt grievance, and it was not without effect: the House of Commons took it up, though in a time of war: nor indeed is it their peculiar office to be employed in the management of a war. Petitioning he asserted to be the unalienable *right* of the People of England; as much their *right* as their lands or any other property; and, for the reasons before given, he highly approved of the Petition under consideration.

The Earl of Surrey remarked, that Mr. Wyvill and the other gentlemen had spoken so fully to the measures under discussion, that little more was left for him to say, than to declare his entire approbation of those measures. He had, he said, lately conversed with gentlemen of the London and Westminster Committees, who informed him that those Committees did not disapprove of the propositions recommended by the Yorkshire Committee, otherwise than on account of the inexpediency of offering any specific propositions at that time. That those Committees thought it better to petition *generally*, as the means of meeting with universal approbation. His Lordship said, that an addition of county members *must* be adopted: that the Duke of Richmond's Plan was merely theoretical, and generally deemed impracticable. Lord Surrey then related a conversation he had with his Grace the Duke of Richmond, who said that he had studied the Plan of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM from its source; and that he thought the Representation not perfect, unless every man was represented; but as he found it was thought impracticable, he was ready to support any other Plan that might by the Public be thought more likely to succeed. His Lordship said, he wished that all those persons who were opposite to the Petition now before them, would have stood forth and avowed such opposition. The conduct of Lord Galway, the proprietor of the borough of Pontefract, who came there to support a measure, tending to overturn his own interest, and of another gentleman then present (the proprietor of half a borough) ought to be held out as a reproach to those men who wish to stand well with the People, and yet support in Parliament, with all their eloquence, the withholding from them those rights which time has robbed them of. Before Lord Surrey sat down, he observed that he was lately appointed Lord Lieutenant of the West-Riding of this county, but he was as independent as ever. He was the servant of the People, and was ready to obey their commands. His Lordship concluded with observing, that the *inequality of our representation* was a mortal grievance, which, if removed, our Constitution would stand a chance of perpetuity.

The Petition and the Resolutions approving the propositions of the circular letter, and postponing the measure of instructions, having been adopted by the meeting, Mr. Wyvill addressed the meeting again.

Mr. Chairman,

The Petition having been adopted, with unanimous approbation by this meeting, I rise without hesitation to propose the reappointment of
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your Committee with its former powers. Without such a deputed body, the measures you have just agreed to can have no continued support. It is the great disadvantage of the People, that, in all their exertions, the collective body cannot frequently be called together; it would be too fatiguing to assemble the Freeholders from every part of this great county, on any but great and important questions. The appointment of a Committee to manage the detail of business, is usual in matters of less moment; in a question of this magnitude, it is absolutely necessary, it is indeed the only pacific measure by which you can have a chance of success. Before the commencement of these county meetings, I found discontents prevailing, and I heard language which, in my apprehension, had a tendency to commotion: I thought it behoved an honest man to try what could be done for procuring redress *by regular and legal means*. With this view I came forward from that situation of obscure, but happy independence, from which nothing could have brought me forth, but a sense of danger to the Liberties of our country. What has been done by the Committee, appears to me to have been for the good of the country; and I am also fully satisfied, it has been done lawfully. There was a time when men in power were not a little concerned to find out any illegality in the proceedings of your Committee: if there had been any, it much behoved them to point it out. If other arguments for the lawfulness of Committees were wanting, I should be satisfied in it from the acquiescence of those men whose interest it was to break them up. In the course of this business I have had my share of fatigue. I have met with obloquy and reproach, but I stood forth from an apprehension of danger to the Constitution: I feel myself supported by the consciousness of having acted as became an honest man, unconnected with men in power or out of it: I am happy in the approbation which my friends have expressed; and while I have the confidence of this Assembly, I shall not withdraw from the public service. I therefore move that the Committee be re-appointed with its former powers.

Lord Galway then rose, and expressed his satisfaction in finding that any act he had done merited the approbation of so respectable an Assembly. His Lordship acquainted them that he had the honour of proposing a similar Petition to the present one at the late meeting of Nottinghamshire, which, though then signed but by few names, the meeting being thinly attended, (owing to insufficient notice) had now received the signature of a considerable majority of the Freeholders. Nothing should be wanting in his endeavours, either in or out of the House, to promote the objects of these Petitions. His Lordship declared his persuasion, that as we have reason to think the present Ministry are with us in the measure of promoting an *Equality in the Parliamentary Representation*, it cannot be urged forward in a better moment than the present.

Proceedings of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION of the County of York, on the 17th, 18th, 20th, and 21st days of December, 1782.

York Tavern, Dec. 17, 1782.

At a meeting of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for the county of York,

Read Letters from the Chairmen of the Committees of Nottinghamshire, Westminster, Southwark, Norfolk, Somersetshire, Gloucestershire,

shire, London, Middlesex, Flintshire, and Carnarvonshire; the Mayors or Town-Clerks of Biddeford, Liverpool, York, Doncaster, Pool, Petersfield, Hereford, Gloucester, and Bridport; the Constables of Manchester; and the Sheriffs or Deputy-Sheriffs of the shires of Moray, Stirling, Haddington, Lanark and Fife, received by the Chairman of this Committee, in answer to his circular letter of the 1st of Nov. last, sent in pursuance of the order of this Committee made that day.—Adjourned to the day following.

York-Tavern, Dec. 18, 1782.

At the adjourned Meeting of the Committee of Association,

Present sixty-four Members,

Read Letters from the Chairman of the Sussex Committee, the Secretary to the Huntingdonshire Committee; the Mayors or Town-Clerks of Bedford, Tenby, Leicester, and Nottingham; the Provost of Glasgow, and the Sheriff of the shire of Argyle, in answer to the Chairman's circular letter of the 1st of November last.

Read and approved of the draught of a Petition to be offered to the consideration of the Freeholders who should attend the previous meeting that evening at the York Tavern.—Adjourned *sine die*.

York Tavern, Dec. 20, 1782.

At a meeting of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION, re-appointed by the General Meeting of the county of York, held the 19th day of December, 1782,

Present forty-six Members,

Resolved, That Sir Thomas Gascoigne, Bart. be added to this Committee.

Resolved, That this Committee will exert itself with unremitting attention and zeal to execute the trust reposed in them, by the appointment of the county of York, on the 19th of December, 1782.

Read a letter from the Committee of Huntingdonshire, in further answer to the circular letter of the 1st of November last.

Adjourned to the day following.

York-Tavern, Dec. 21, 1782.

Read and approved the letter prepared by the Chairman, as a proper answer to the several Public Bodies who have given their opinion and advice on the subject of the circular letter, dated November 1, 1782.

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

SUSSEX.

Lewes, January 20, 1782.

On Saturday we had a very numerous and respectable meeting here, in consequence of a public notice given by the High Sheriff for that purpose. The notice being read, the business of the day was opened, and the nature of it explained by Sir Godfrey Webster, who, after a very pertinent and judicious exordium, in which he strongly enforced the right of petitioning in the subject, produced and read, in the form of a motion, a Petition, founded on so firm a basis, and couched in such

concise and Constitutional language, that we defy even the abettors of venality and corruption, to brand it with their wonted epithets, **FACETIOUS! INTERESTED! or REBELLIOUS!** which Sir Godfrey asserted was the language used by those who wished to stem the progress of this grand **NATIONAL REFORM**. The Petition being read, it immediately called forth the attention of that known friend to his country, Col. Hay, who rose, and declared that it met his most hearty concurrence and assent, and begged to second it. Lord George Lennox rose, and, with a steady and determined uniformity, which has ever distinguished that nobleman, assented to the motion, and promised it his utmost support in the House of Commons,

Mr. Courthope obstructed the Court, by calling for an explanation of certain words in the Petition, *i. e.* "separate interest."

This occasioned Lord Surrey to rise, who said, by "separate interest" was meant the Representatives of venal boroughs, through whom, added his Lordship, in consideration of a specific sum, the French King might obtain a seat in the British Senate House for a man, who should come there for the determined purpose of betraying the dearest rights and interests of this country. This explanation was satisfactory to Mr. Courthope.

The debate on the question was now returned to; and Mr. Pelham, in the course of his speeches, having expressed his hearty approbation of *shortening the duration of Parliament*, confessed that *grievances existed*; that he wished to see the yeomanry of England enjoy a larger share in electing the Representatives of the People, but fearing too wide a door might be opened; that certain systems might be brought forward, which he could not approve of; and on this resting his arguments for not assenting to the motion, in his capacity as a Freeholder, but declaring, at the same time, that as the Representative of the People, he should always be happy to obey the commands of his constituents.

Lord Surrey got up and endeavoured to persuade him, that the arguments he made use of should have made him concur with the Petition, and not oppose it; that a man could not be a friend to the frequency of election, who could oppose the establishing the *rights* of it in the People, who were notoriously deprived thereof, whenever a borough became the private property of an individual. His Lordship called it a strange perversion of justice, that the legislature should deprive poor individuals of their franchise (as in the case of the neighbouring borough of Shoreham) and think the safety of the Constitution required their adding a large district of the county to the borough, for being tempted by small bribes of ten or twenty guineas; to sell a single vote, while they permitted noblemen, of the first rank and fortune, to pursue, with impunity, the scandalous traffic of selling seats in Parliament for thousands, which, to their eternal disgrace, they most notoriously practised; that he could not reconcile the Honourable Gentleman's wishes to encrease the power of the yeomanry of England, with opposing a measure which evidently tended to procure that effect; that he revered the name of Pelham; and that the last time he appeared in that place, was to oppose the Honourable Gentleman's re-election, because he had been found voting with men whose principles and conduct had nearly ruined this country; that he hoped never to see him amongst them again, and that he was happy to find him disposed to support the *Enquiry in Parliament*; and that while he maintained the principles of the Pelhams, his predecessors, he could come on a future occasion, with

with infinitely more pleasure to support, than he had done to oppose him. He observed, that out of twenty-eight Members, not more than ten were connected with the county.

His Lordship, in reply to Mr. Shelly, who expressed his fears of distressing the *King's Ministers*, informed him, that in various conversations he had had with the Earl of Shelburne, the noble Lord had repeatedly declared, that a REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE had his warmest wishes, and should have the most honourable support in Parliament; that Mr. Pitt had declared he held the REFORM essential to the Constitution, and would never abandon the hopes of seeing it effected.

The debates being finished, a letter from his Grace the Duke of Richmond to the High Sheriff [see the Committee of Proceedings] was read, after which the question was put, and carried almost unanimously, there appearing not more than ten dissenting hands.

At a very numerous and respectable Meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Freeholders, and Others, the Inhabitants of the County of SUSSEX, held at the Town-Hall, in LEWES, on Saturday the 18th of January, 1783, in pursuance of an Advertisement from the High Sheriff of the said County for that purpose,

WILLIAM FRANKLAND, Esq. in the Chair,

The following Petition being read and seconded, passed in the affirmative:

To the Honourable the Commons of Great-Britain, in Parliament assembled,

The humble Petition of the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, Freeholders, and Others, the Inhabitants of the County of SUSSEX,

Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, thoroughly sensible of the excellence of the Constitution, and of that essential branch of it, the Representation of the Commons in Parliament, cannot but lament the present state of the same, so partially elected, and having frequently a separate interest from the People, are unequal to express the general sense of the said Commons.

That your Petitioners consider the same as a grievance materially affecting your Petitioners, and the whole kingdom.

Your Petitioners therefore pray this honourable House to take the same into their speedy consideration, and to afford such relief as to this Honourable House shall seem meet.

Resolved unanimously, That the High Sheriff do sign the said Petition, as the sense of this meeting.

Resolved unanimously, That the Members for this county be requested to present the said Petition to Parliament.

WM. FRANKLAND, Chairman.

At a Meeting of the Committee of the County of Sussex, held at the White Hart Inn, in Lewes, on Saturday the 18th day of January, 1783.

Present

Present—William Frankland, Esq. Chairman; the Earl of Surrey; Wm. Kemp, Serjeant at Law; John Norton, Thomas Norton, Henry Jackson, Wm. Green, Esquires.

The Chairman of the Committee communicated the following letter, received by him from his Grace the Duke of Richmond.

Whitehall, 17th Jan. 1783.

SIR,

You may easily believe, that being one of those who joined in requesting you to call a County Meeting, nothing but illness can prevent my attending it, and it is with infinite regret I submit to the decision of my physicians, who pronounce, that it is not safe for me to leave London.

I trust, that my sentiments on the subject of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM are in general sufficiently known, and that without further assurances, I might be depended upon for giving it every support in my power; but some circumstances made me wish to state them as briefly as possible to the county of Sussex. They are formed on the experience of *twenty-six years*, which, whether in or out of Government, has equally convinced me, that a restoration of a genuine House of Commons, by a renovation of the RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE, is the only remedy against that system of *corruption* which has brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatens it with the loss of Liberty.

I take the grievance of the present state of election to be its *gross inequality*. All the electors in Great-Britain do not amount to one sixth part of the whole people, and a still greater inequality subsists in the elections made by that sixth part: for one seventh part of them elect a majority, so that one forty-second part of the nation disposes of the property of the whole, and have their lives and liberties at command.—And this forty-second part, far from consisting of the most opulent part of the kingdom, is composed of the small boroughs, most of which are become either the private property of individuals, or are notoriously sold to the best bidder: so that the counties and great cities are, in fact, as well as the great mass of the people, swallowed up in this system of corruption.

My ideas of REFORM undoubtedly go to one that shall be compleat and general throughout the kingdom. I see such fatal consequences arise from the present partial and accidental state of elections, that I cannot take upon me to propose any new mode that partakes of the same defects. If we do not differ from the abettors of corruption, upon the broad principle of *inequality in Election, and the universal Right of the People to be represented*, and are contending only for a degree of partiality, more or less, I fear our ground is *not sound*; if we mean only to substitute partiality for partiality, and are struggling but for its extent, one man's whim may be as good as another's conceit, and we have nothing certain to direct us; and if INEQUALITY is still to subsist, the advocates for the present system will have the sanction of time, and the risk of changes to oppose to us, which will have their weight, when it is but for a change of partiality that we contend.

I have thought that a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM had much more simple and unerring guides to lead us to our end: I mean the true principles of the Constitution, and the Rights of the People. If these exist, I do not consider myself at liberty to speculate upon systems. I have no choice, but to give every man his own.

But

But this, it seems, is by some thought impracticable, and the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, in his letter of the 7th of December, to Alderman Crosby, as Chairman of the Committee of the Livery of London, which has been published, very concisely decides it to be so: for I presume his objection of impracticability, is not confined to *my plan*, which I believe he has never seen, *but to the extent of the idea*; and yet Mr. Wyvill, in the second address of the Yorkshire Committee to the electors in Great-Britain, speaking of the more or less extensive plan, says, "That the diversity of sentiments does not arise from a difference of political principles, for in them there is an *entire agreement*, but solely from considerations of a *prudential nature*."

How far it is wise for those who *entirely agree in principle* upon the rights of men to *endeavour to persuade them, that the recovery of their birthrights and most essential interests "are not reducible to practice, nor attainable by any regular or constitutional efforts of theirs,"* is what I must leave to others to determine. But the truth of this assertion is what I can never subscribe to. I cannot but think that this nation ever has its own power, by peaceful and constitutional efforts, to do itself justice; and that *nothing* can render attempts for this purpose impracticable, but either a general indolence and *indifference* to all that requires exertion, though for the noblest purposes, or such *prejudice to favourite systems as shall divide the people*.

To guard against such an imputation falling on *me*, I am most ready to agree to an address in the most general terms, *not pointing at any specific mode of Reform in the Petition, or by instructions to our Members, or by resolutions*; but submitting the remedy, as in my opinion it ought to be in the *first instance*, to Parliament itself; which I conceive to be at least as equal to such a consideration as any Provincial Committee.

Should Mr. Wyvill's first or second Plan be proposed in Parliament, or any thing like it, *although* I shall lament that we, for a moment quit our advantageous ground of the *Constitution and the Rights of Men*, yet I shall certainly give every support in my power to this or any amendment. And it certainly will be a considerable improvement, that instead of a forty-second, it should be a thirty-sixth or thirtieth part that shall decide the concerns of the whole People. It will be something material they will have gained, and may become a step to the more easy attainment of their full privileges.

I shall most sincerely hope, that that Plan may be found attainable; but I never can *consent to tell the People*, and I hope in God they *never will believe*, that the recovery of any Right, which Nature and the Constitution have given them, is *impracticable*. On the contrary, convinced myself, I wish them *ever* to believe, if they please to claim them, they *will, and must, have the full extent of their Rights*.

I have thought it necessary to say thus much, on an impression I cannot think indifferent the public should entertain.

The measure for which you are assembled meets with my hearty concurrence; and I shall be happy if these my sentiments, which I beg you would communicate to the meeting of the county of Sussex, should meet with their approbation.

It is with the highest esteem and regard, that I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient, and most humble servant,

RICHMOND, &c.

To Wm. Frankland, Esq. High Sheriff of the County of Sussex.

Copy

Copy of a letter from the Committee of the County of Middlesex to the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, Chairman of the Committee of the County of York.

SIR,

The Committee of the county of Middlesex have directed me, on their behalf, to return to you, and to the Committee of the county of York, our thanks for your friendly communication and intercourse, which has hitherto been kept up, and we trust will be continued between the Petitioning bodies, until they shall have finally and fully succeeded in obtaining a substantial REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THIS KINGDOM IN PARLIAMENT.

To be as nearly as possible unanimous, and unequivocal in our desires and declarations upon this subject, we consider as one great and important object of that intercourse.

To maintain that unanimity, it was, that the Committee of the county of Middlesex acquiesced readily to your wise recommendation of a general petition for a REFORM, in which all good men agree, and avoided any mention of the *particular Reform*, in which the best men may for some time differ, and of which the worst men will at all times take advantage.

And, in our opinion, the effect of descending to particulars must be exactly the same, whether those particulars are contained in a Petition, or in instructions, or in resolutions. And when we acknowledge the strength of your own arguments for excluding particulars from the *Petitions*, we suppose it impossible to expect those particulars in the shape of *instructions*; and after having by our solicitations obtained from the gentlemen of the Yorkshire Committee to forbear the proposed instructions, we could not expect that the same particulars should appear under the name of *resolutions*: for what, indeed, are stronger instructions to Members, than the resolutions of a county meeting? We are sorry that any particulars (from which we cautiously abstained) have, at this stage of our progress, been brought forward in any shape.

On the particulars contained in those resolutions, it is now our duty to return to you our opinion.

When we read those resolutions (under the name of instructions) as communicated by your letter, we feared that we could not give our concurrence to them.

We feared that private and pocket boroughs were to be excluded from the desired REFORM, and that Parliamentary Representation—(that is, the power of disposing of the lives and interests of the Public) was still to continue private property. From this idea we must for ever be averse.

But we are happy to perceive, from the narrative of the proceedings of the county of York on the 19th of December last, that our fears were created (as we trust) merely by the wording of those resolutions; and with extreme satisfaction we are desirous to believe that we are unanimous with your county: for in that narrative we find Mr. Stanhope declaring, that “He thought the thanks of the meeting were particularly due to a noble Lord then present, who had stood forward in support of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, although he was the proprietor of a borough;” and the Earl of Surrey declaring, that “No person could be against the present Petition, except the proprietors
“ of

" of purchased boroughs, and that the conduct of the proprietor of a
 " borough, who came there to support a measure *tending to overturn his*
 " *own interest*, and of another gentleman then present (the proprietor
 " of half a borough) ought to be *held out as a reproach* to those men
 " who wish to stand well with the People, and yet support, in Parlia-
 " ment, with all their eloquence, **THE WITH-HOLDING FROM**
 " **THEM THOSE RIGHTS WHICH TIME HAS ROBBED**
 " **THEM OF.**"

We also find the unanimous thanks of the county " to three gentle-
 " men, for their **DISINTERESTED** support of a Petition, which
 " **AFFECTS THEIR PRIVATE PROPERTY.**"

We, therefore, the Committee of Middlesex, collecting the
 sense of the Committee and county of York from the proceedings
 of the last County Meeting, and *especially* from those parts of the pro-
 ceedings which we have *extracted as above*, are happy in declaring our-
 selves unanimously of the opinion of the Earl of Surrey so declared on
 this subject; and unanimously of the opinion of the county of York,
 that all persons acting on the principles which caused their thanks, de-
 serve also the thanks and gratitude of all other parts of the country.

JAMES TOWNSEND,

Chairman of the Committee of the county of Middlesex,

Freemasons' Tavern, Feb. 12, 1783.

E S S E X.

At a General County Meeting held at the Shire-hall at Chelmsford,
 on Thursday the 10th of April, 1783, summoned by John Godsolve
 Cross, Esq. High Sheriff, at the requisition of several gentlemen, for
 the express purpose of Petitioning Parliament for a more **EQUAL RE-**
PRESENTATION, AND SHORTENING THE DURATION OF
PARLIAMENT, it was

Resolved unanimously, That this Meeting, highly approving the
 Quintuple Alliance; empower their Committee to appoint and send six
 deputies to join that respectable body, to watch the effects of the Peti-
 tions of the People, praying for a **JUST AND EQUAL REPRESENTA-**
TION, AND SHORT PARLIAMENTS.

J. JOLLIF TURNELL, Chairman.

At a Meeting of the Essex Committee, at the Black Boy at Chelms-
 ford, on Thursday the 10th of April, 1783,

T. BRAND HOLLIS, Esq. in the Chair,

Present eighteen Members,

Resolved unanimously, That an answer be returned to the Rev. Mr.
 Wyvill, Chairman to the Yorkshire Committee.

Resolved unanimously, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that
 no Ministry will deserve the confidence and approbation of the People,
 who shall not sincerely support a more **EQUAL PARLIAMENTARY**
REPRESENTATION.

T. B. HOLLIS, Chairman.

At a meeting of the Quintuple Alliance, held at the Paul's Head Tavern, Cateaton-street, on Thursday, the 22d of May, 1783,

Sir WATKIN LEWES, Knt. in the Chair,

Mr. Brand Hollis brought up a report of the proceedings of the delegates assembled at the Globe Tavern, Fleet-street, on Tuesday, the 13th of May instant.

The said proceedings being read, as follow :

At an assembly of the delegates from the Associated Committees, held at the Globe Tavern, Fleet-street, on Tuesday, the 13th of May, 1783,

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That his Grace the Duke of Richmond be requested to do this assembly the honour of accepting the office of Chairman.

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That notwithstanding the disappointment which the People have met with in their late application to the House of Commons, in favour of a **PARLIAMENTARY REFORM**, it be recommended to them never to abandon their **JUST RIGHTS**, but to promote and **ASSERT THEM** by all Constitutional measures belonging to Englishmen.

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That it be recommended to the Committees of Association and Correspondence, for the three districts of this metropolis, London, Westminster, and Southwark, to unite in a monthly meeting, for the purpose of considering upon the best means of carrying into effect those Constitutional measures they were elected to support.

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That a report of these resolutions be made to the next meeting of the Quintuple Alliance for their consideration.

Extract from the minutes,

T. H. BURLEY OLDFIELD, Sec.

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That the said resolutions be approved, and adopted by this alliance.

Resolved, *nem. con.*

That the other counties, cities, towns, and petitioning bodies in this kingdom, be earnestly recommended to elect delegates, to meet those already chosen, for the purpose of giving vigour and efficacy to that great **CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE**, which it is the object of this alliance to assert and to accomplish.

Whereas an **EQUAL AND UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE** has been spoken of as foreign to the English Constitution, and impracticable: It is therefore

Resolved,

That it is a maxim of common law, and a fundamental principle of the Constitution, that " Law, to bind all, must be assented to by all."

Resolved,

That in a Constitutional sense, every man is understood to give assent to laws who has a vote in the election of a Representative for the *elective body* of which he is a *member*.

Resolved,

That an **EQUAL AND UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE**, would not only be practicable, but perfectly easy, by dividing each county and large city into as many districts, as, by its population, it is entitled to elect members; and that such a plan is not less

less recommended by its equal justice, than by its extreme simplicity and general convenience.

Resolved,

That this alliance perfectly accords with his Grace the Duke of Richmond, in its hopes, that "THE PEOPLE NEVER WILL BELIEVE THAT THE RECOVERY OF ANY RIGHT, WHICH NATURE AND THE CONSTITUTION HAS GIVEN THEM, IS IMPRACTICABLE; and is convinced, that, "IF THEY PLEASE TO CLAIM THEM, THEY WILL, AND MUST, HAVE THE FULL EXTENT OF THEIR RIGHTS."

By order of the Alliance,

T. H. BURLEY OLDFIELD, Sec.

York Tavern, Oct. 1, 1783.

At a Meeting of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION, —Present, Rev. Mr. Wyvill, the Earl of Effingham, Lord Galway, and the Duke of Rutland.

Resolved unanimously, That his Grace the Duke of Rutland, John Seavers Richardson, Esq. Samuel Hamer Oates, Esq. Hans Bulk, Esq. and Lieutenant-Colonel O'Carroll, be added to this Committee.

The several following Resolves were also unanimously agreed to, viz.

That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Right Honourable William Pitt, for his excellent propositions submitted to Parliament on the 7th of May last, towards accomplishing a substantial *Redress of Parliamentary Abuses*, complained of by the Petitions of the People. That notwithstanding our wishes did not meet with success on that day, we still retain hopes that his virtuous perseverance, aided by the uncorrupt part of the Senate, and strenuously supported by the People, will in time effect such a REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT as may form a firm barrier against the inroads of corruption.

That the Chairman be directed to take the earliest opportunity of communicating the preceding resolutions to the Right Hon. William Pitt.

That the thanks of this Committee be given to those honourable Members of the House of Commons by whom Mr. Pitt's propositions on the 7th of May were supported.

That it appears to this Committee, that the rejection of those propositions on the 7th of May, may be chiefly imputed to the operation of that ruinous political system by which the civil war with America was lighted up, the British empire dismembered, and the plan of *Parliamentary seduction* carried to its last fatal extreme. And it is also considered by this Committee, that the re-admission of the abettors of such a system into power, is a most formidable obstacle to the necessary renovation of the Constitution.

That it behoves the People of Britain, as they tender their own personal freedom and honour, the safety of the community, or the welfare of generations yet unborn, not to despair of the public weal: nor, from an indiscriminate distrust of public men, to sink into a state of abject supineness and inactivity, and a neglect of those legal means of defence, by which the Constitution may yet be preserved. On the contrary, it is the earnest exhortation of this Committee to every friend to the peace and freedom of the nation, to stand forth in this hour of distress, and
with

with unshaken courage, and by every vigorous and lawful effort, to support the REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT—without which, Britain must be overwhelmed by the accumulated miseries of a corrupt system of government.

That this Committee, assured that the bosoms of their constituents are still animated with sentiments of public spirit and unabated zeal for the constitution, doth again call upon the Freeholders of this great county, to meet and deliberate on the propriety of renewing their application to Parliament for a more fair and equitable Representation of the People; and if that shall be thought expedient, to represent to Parliament in decent, but firm and manly terms of expostulation, the necessity for an effectual restoration of the Constitution, and that such meeting be held on Thursday, the 8th day of January, 1784.

That the Chairman be desired to write to the two worthy Members for this county, expressing, in strong terms of approbation, the thanks of this Committee for their attendance and support given in the House of Commons to Mr. Pitt's motion for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM on the 7th of May last.

That this Meeting be adjourned till to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock.

C. WYVILL, Chairman.

Copy of the official letter of thanks sent by the Chairman of the Yorkshire Committee to the Right Hon. William Pitt, for his conduct in Parliament on the 7th of May, and also a copy of Mr. Pitt's Answer:

York, October 3, 1783.

SIR,

In obedience to the direction of the COMMITTEE OF ASSOCIATION for the county of York, I have the honour to transmit to you the inclosed account of their proceedings at the late meeting; and I am happy to assure you, that their resolution of thanks to you for your conduct in Parliament on the 7th of May, and their resolution, expressing their hope of success by your *virtuous perseverance*, properly supported by the *incorrupt* part of Parliament, and of the People, were passed with perfect unanimity.

I am, Sir, with high respect, your most obedient humble servant,

C. WYVILL.

Berkeley-square, Nov. 8, 1783.

SIR,

On my return to town, I received the honour of your letter, accompanied by the resolutions of the Committee on the 1st of October. I have the greatest satisfaction in finding, that the propositions which I had submitted to Parliament in the last session, are considered by them as tending to accomplish A REFORM OF PARLIAMENTARY ABUSES complained of by the Petition of the People. I trust I need not assure you, that no exertions or perseverance on my part shall be wanting in support of the PRINCIPLES on which those propositions

tions were founded. Unsuccessful as my attempts have hitherto proved, I shall ANXIOUSLY wait for a SEASONABLE moment of renewing them, and eagerly embrace it, whenever there is a JUST PROSPECT OF DOING IT WITH EFFECT. I am truly sensible of the obliging manner in which you have had the goodness to convey to me the sense of the Committee, and am, with great respect, your most obedient humble servant,

W. PITT.

At a Meeting of the Society for CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION, held at Holyland's Coffee-House, on Friday, Dec. 5, 1783.

Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1783.

SIR,

We had the honour of receiving, last week, the present of pamphlets published by the Society for Constitutional Information. We beg you will return to that very respectable Society our most cordial acknowledgments for this testimony of their favour; and to assure them, that as we venerate the public virtue which led them to ASSOCIATE for the noble purposes of diffusing among their fellow-citizens a knowledge of their Constitutional RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES; so we ever shall consider it as our duty, and our honour to co-operate with them in every measure that may have a tendency to accomplish for the People the exercise of those elective powers, so essential to our national prosperity and felicity.

We are convinced of the propriety of impressing on the minds of the People a sense of their privileges, in order to rouse them to active exertions for recovery of those privileges, that we have determined, after the example of the Society, to circulate among our countrymen small tracts and pamphlets on the subject of Constitutional Liberty. In consequence of this determination, we have already got printed a pamphlet on the Parliamentary Representation of the boroughs of Scotland, of which we have taken the liberty to send you a few copies for the perusal of the Society.

We are happy to inform the Society, that the business of REFORMATION in Scotland, is still prosecuted with vigour. Our boroughs are more and more closely united, and are determined to persevere with the utmost firmness, till the great objects, at which they aim, are fully attained. We are forming measures for a general Convention of Delegates from the different boroughs, to be held at Edinburgh. This we expect will take place in the course of a month; it cannot be sooner, as we are expecting the junction of other boroughs.

We hope we shall have the pleasure of frequent communications from the Society, and we are, Sir, very respectfully, your most obedient servant, by appointment of the Committee,

THOMAS M'GRUGAR, Sec.

To Thomas Yates, Esq.

(A N S W E R ,)

London, Nov. 8, 1783.

SIR,

I am directed by the Society for Constitutional Information, to request, that you will return their sincerest thanks to the Committee, as well

well for the information contained in your letter, as for the pamphlets which they have done us the honour to transmit. It, indeed, affords peculiar pleasure to the Society to find, that the Committee have adopted the only means by which a permanent and salutary REFORMATION can be effected, the distribution of small tracts on Constitutional Subjects among the People of Scotland. For unless the People at large have some knowledge of their rights as men, and as Citizens, how can it be expected that they will exert themselves at all, or at least that their exertions will be properly directed?

The common People of England have not as yet totally emerged from that political ignorance, the melancholy effects of which have been hitherto felt so severely in Scotland. Yet even in that ignorance we may at least find this consolation, that it is not an incurable evil. The want of Constitutional information is much less formidable than the absence of national spirit; and miserable indeed must have been the condition of the good people of Great-Britain, if, with a full knowledge of all their RIGHTS, they had tamely submitted to see them wrested from them by an handful of venal electors.

We have the pleasure to inform the Committee, that we have already experienced the salutary effects arising from the well-timed circulation of Constitutional Tracts among the lower classes of the people. We find the spirit of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM gain ground in England every day; and we doubt not, but that the same means will much facilitate the attainment of their objects, to the Committee of Citizens of Edinburgh.

The Society are happy to hear of the vigour with which the business of Reformation is prosecuted in Scotland, and rejoice at the laudable spirit which pervades that country. They are anxious to know the result of the deliberations of the general Convention of Delegates, which was expected to take place in the course of this month, and requests the favour of your further communication on the subject. I have the honour to be, with all respect, Sir, your most obedient servant,

THO. YATES, Sec.

To Thomas M^rGrugar, Esq.

A Letter from the Rev. Dr. RICHARD PRICE, to the Secretary of the Committee of Citizens of Edinburgh.

Newington Green, near London,
Jan. 27, 1784.

SIR,

I have received, with particular pleasure, the letter which you have directed to me by order of the Committee of Citizens of Edinburgh. They have done me great honour, by communicating to me the account contained in your letter of their proceedings, and by reckoning me among the friends to the important cause in which they are engaged.

My power is little; but such as it is, I am always glad to employ it, as far as it can go, in promoting the best interests of mankind. Among these interests I reckon CIVIL LIBERTY. Without this, Civil Government is, in my opinion, an usurpation and a curse; and men are creatures little better than a herd of beasts. With such sentiments, it is impossible for me not to be ardent in my wishes, that every attempt to recover

recover this inestimable blessing may succeed; or not to rejoice in that spirit of resistance to oppression which has lately manifested itself in the world. God grant that this spirit may increase till it has abolished all *Despotic Governments*, and exterminated that slavery which debases mankind. This spirit first rose in America. It soon reached Ireland. It has diffused itself into some foreign countries; and your letter informs me, that it is now animating Scotland.

There seems, indeed, to be an important Revolution approaching. The ideas of men are changing fast. Their minds are growing more enlightened; and a general conviction is likely to take place, that "Legitimate government is the dominion of men over *themselves*; and not the dominion of communities over communities, or of any men over other men." When this happens, **ALL SLAVISH GOVERNMENTS MUST FALL, AND A GENERAL REFORMATION WILL TAKE PLACE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS.**

There is amongst the Statesmen of the present times a want of foresight and an infatuation which may end fatally for them. Were they wise, they could see this rising spirit, and by yielding to it, make themselves great and happy: But instead of this, they are endeavouring to crush it, and making themselves enemies to the improvement of the world. *Reformation* they term innovation, and a struggle to recover long lost RIGHTS, they term sedition and rebellion. But their opposition is likely to prove the means of its own defeat. It provokes to a more narrow enquiry into the RIGHTS OF MEN, extends their views, and produces a greater disdain of SLAVERY, a warmer zeal for the principles of LIBERTY, and a more general and firm determination to support them. And the consequence must be such a contest between the abettors of LIBERTY and TYRANNY, as will produce convulsions, and terminate in the *destruction* of the latter, and a brighter triumph of the former.

Such of late has been the issue of that infatuation of Statesmen, which produced the American war; and such possibly may be its issue in Britain, should our Rulers continue much longer to maintain abuses, which are become so flagrant as to strike the attention, and excite the indignation of all impartial and considerate men.

The danger of producing confusion and of setting government afloat, is often urged as a reason against attempts to REFORM. But this is an argument that proves too much. Ought it to influence in France, Spain, Turkey, &c. were the people there duly sensible of their Rights, and of the evil of Arbitrary Government? If so, all the vile Tyrannies of the world must be suffered to continue as they are. No efforts must be ever made to overthrow them; and ignorance, darkness, slavery and misery, must be for ever perpetuated amongst mankind. But in truth, no such danger as that now supposed, would exist, were it not for the folly of the Rulers of States. Were they prudent enough to fall in with public conviction, and consent to gradual correction of abuses, when it is called for, the great work of REFORMATION would go on quietly, and they would secure to themselves a power of an infinitely more honourable and solid nature than that they now possess.

In this country we boast of our Liberty; and it is true that our Constitution of Government is, in *theory*, excellent. But we enjoy only the forms of it. Luxury and corruption, and changes produced by time, have destroyed the spirit of it, and converted it into a name and a mockery. It supposes a fair Representation of the Body of the People;
and

and this is essential to Constitutional Liberty in every State. Where this is wanting, the People are governed by laws to which they do not give their consent, and by Masters, in choosing whom they have no voice; and over whom they have no controul; and this is one of the properest definitions that can be given of Political Slavery. A people in this condition may possess many privileges; but they can have no Constitutional security for them. They must owe them to the forbearance and clemency of their Masters; and for this reason they can no more be termed free, than a Negro can be termed free, who has no other security for just treatment than the good nature, or the discretion of his proprietor.

Laws in a free State are nothing but the will of the community, and Governors are its servants. Let any one apply this observation to our own country. The majority of that assembly, which has the command of our lives and fortunes, is chosen by about six thousand of the meanest persons, who sell their votes; and a General Election is little more than a general auction for disposing of venal and rotten burghs. Is an assembly, so created, a Representation of the Kingdom? Are the laws made by it the will of the Community? Can it be justly said, that a People, so governed, are free?

From the accounts you have sent me, I learn, that in Scotland, the state of the Representation is worse than in England; and that the body of the People, particularly in the Royal Burghs, do not enjoy the shadow of Liberty. But they are awakened to a sense of their Rights; and the exertions they are making to emancipate themselves, must be admired by all that desire to see mankind free and happy. Nothing can be better adopted to inform and animate them in their exertions than the circulation of such tracts as those you have sent me. May their zeal increase, and may the number of those men diminish who are for keeping mankind in abjection and servility. Should the burghesses in the Royal Burghs be unanimous in claiming their Rights, they must be regarded. Amongst the prevailing degeneracy, there are in the House of Commons many virtuous members who will plead their cause.

The late daring attempts of a junto to establish their own power have shewn, in a striking light, the necessity of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. These attempts have been happily defeated by the Resolution of our Sovereign; and he is now receiving the thanks of the kingdom. He sees, without doubt, that the best security of his throne, is the love of his People; and that he can in no way be so great and happy as by throwing himself upon them, and promoting all their endeavours to gain a House of Commons that shall really represent them, and speak their voice. Some of his present Ministers also have distinguished themselves as advocates for a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM; and all applications or Petitions which have this object in view, must meet with their approbation and concurrence. This then is the auspicious moment for such exertions as the Burghs in Scotland are now making. May they go on and prosper!

I request the favour of you, Sir, to convey these sentiments to your Committee. I rely on their candour, and hope they will excuse me, should they think that any improper expressions have escaped me. I am, Sir, with great respect, and the best wishes, their and your very obedient and humble Servant,

RICHARD PRICE.

To Mr. Thos. M'Grugar, Sec. &c.

From

From the BELFAST NEWS LETTER.

As Ireland, after suffering many ages under the hand of oppression, has with unparalleled virtue raised herself to eminence in the political scale, and is at this hour the scene of the most dignified and interesting efforts that Europe affords;—we hope, that the distinguished ability of A DUKE OF RICHMOND will render the insertion of a letter from his pen to the Committee of correspondence, pleasing.—

N. B. We are glad so early to communicate it. The elegance of the composition will be obvious to every eye; as the epistolary style has seldom appeared in more grace, energy or spirit.

To Lieut. Col. SHARMAN, Chairman of the COMMITTEE of CORRESPONDENCE at BELFAST.

SIR,

I have been honoured with a letter from Belfast, dated the 19th of July last, written in the name of the committee of Correspondence appointed by the Delegates of Forty-five Volunteer Corps assembled at Lisburn on the first day of the same month, for taking preparatory steps to forward their intentions on the subject of a more EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT, and signed by their Secretary, Mr. Henry Joy, jun.

In this letter, after shewing the corrupt state of the boroughs in Ireland, the general opinion of the people that the constitution can be restored to its ancient purity and vigour, by no other means than A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, and informing me of the steps which have been taken and are taking by the Volunteers, in determining to procure this desirable object, the Committee is pleased “to request my sentiments and advice as to the best, most eligible, and most practicable mode of destroying, restraining or counteracting this hydra of corruption, *borough influence*, in order to lay my opinion before the Provincial Assembly of Delegates which is to be held at Dunganon, on the 8th of September next.”

This great mark of confidence from Gentlemen in whom so much trust is placed, does me great honour; for as I have not the pleasure of being personally known to any of them, I can owe it but to the favourable opinion they are pleased to entertain of my constant and zealous endeavours in the public service.

I am sensible that the only proper return I can make for this honourable distinction, is to obey their commands in the best manner I am able; for although my insufficiency for so arduous a task would afford me but too good an excuse for declining it, yet I feel it would be inconsistent with my ideas of the obligation every man is under to serve the public as well as he can, if I was to refuse giving my opinions, such as they are, when thus called upon by a respectable body of gentlemen. Besides my inability, I have to regret the want of time to collect and arrange my thoughts in such a manner as to be fit to appear before you, and the necessary limits of a letter which will not admit of the extensive investigation which a subject of this vast importance deserves: for although I fear I must be long, I am sensible I cannot do it justice.

The subject of a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, is that which of all others in my opinion most deserves the attention of the public, as I conceive it would include every other advantage which a nation can wish; and I have no hesitation in saying, that from every consideration

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which

which I have been able to give to this great question, that for many years has occupied my mind; and from every day's experience to the present hour, I am more and more convinced that the **RESTORING THE RIGHT OF VOTING UNIVERSALLY** *to every man not incapacitated by nature for want of reason, or by law for the commission of crimes, together with* **ANNUAL ELECTIONS**, *is the only REFORM that can be effectual and permanent.* I am further convinced that it is the only reform that is practicable.

All other plans that are of a palliative nature have been found insufficient to interest and animate the great body of the people, from whose earnestness alone any reform can be expected. A long exclusion from any share in the legislature of their country has rendered the great mass of the people indifferent whether the monopoly that subsists continues in the hand of a more or less extended company; or, whether it is divided by them into shares of somewhat more or less just proportions: the public feels itself unconcerned in these contests, except as to the oppressions it endures, and the exactions it suffers, which it knows must continue so long as the people remain deprived of all controul over their representatives. This indifference of theirs, when the last attempt was made for additional county members, was used by our opponents as an argument against *all reform*: it was asked with a triumphant air, Where are the Petitions from the inhabitants of Birmingham, Manchester, Hallifax, and other great unrepresented towns? And their silence was deemed a proof of their acquiescence and satisfaction in the form of elections. The truth is, that the People have been so often deceived that they will now scarcely trust any set of men; and nothing but self-evident conviction that a measure tends effectually to the recovery of their *Rights*, can or indeed ought to interest them in its favour.

The lesser REFORM has been attempted with every possible advantage in its favour; not only from the zealous support of the advocates for a more equal one, but from the assistance of men of great weight both in and out of power. But with all those temperaments and helps, it has failed; not one proselyte has been gained from corruption, nor has the least ray of hope been held out from any quarter, that the House of Commons was inclined to adopt any other mode of REFORM. The weight of corruption has crushed this more gentle, as it would have defeated any more efficacious plan in the same circumstances. From that quarter therefore, I have nothing to hope. It is from the People at large that I expect any good, and I am convinced that the only way to make them feel that they are really concerned in the business, is to contend for their full, clear, and indisputable *Rights of universal Representation*. I call them such, not only from my own conviction, but from the admission of the friends to the more moderate Plan, who in the second Address of the Yorkshire Committee to the People confess, that our claims are forced on the true principles of the Constitution, and only object to them on account of impracticability. But their plan has now had a fair trial, and, if it is from the inclination of Parliament that practicability is to be expected, has been found as impracticable as ours.

The more extensive Plan, at the same time that its operation is more complete, depends on a more effectual support, that of the People.

I am also persuaded that if the scheme for additional county members had proceeded any further, infinite difficulties would have arisen in adjusting it. Neither the Yorkshire Committee nor Mr. Pitt have given

the detail of their Plan. A just repartition would have been a most intricate task; for where different interests are separately represented, the proportion is not very easy to ascertain. The doubt you state concerning this mode of *Reform* appears to me well founded; a few great families might divide a county between them, and chuse the members by a house-list, like East India Directors. Another difficulty from the increase of the number of members, which might render the House more tumultuous than deliberative, has its weight. But the greatest objection in my opinion to this, and to every other narrow and contracted *Plan of Reform*, is, that it proceeds upon the same bad principle as the abuse it pretends to rectify; it is still partial and unequal: A vast majority of the community is still left unrepresented; and its most essential concerns, life, liberty, and property, continue in the absolute disposal of those whom they do not chuse, and over whom they have no controul. In the arrangement of Plans of this kind, there is no leading principle to determine that the addition ought to be one hundred, fifty, or two hundred; that the assortment should be according to the population, property, or taxes, paid in each county; that any supposed proportion between the landed and trading interest is the just one; and that the division of county and city members will correspond with this proportion when found. All is at sea, without any compass to enable us to distinguish the safe from the dangerous course.

But in the more liberal and great Plan of *universal Representation*, a clear and distinct principle at once appears, that cannot lead us wrong. Not expediency, but right. If it is not a maxim of our Constitution, that a British subject is to be governed only by laws to which he has consented by himself or his representative, we should instantly abandon the error; but if it is the essential of freedom, founded on the eternal principles of justice and wisdom, and our unalienable birthright, we should not hesitate in asserting it. Let us then but determine to act upon this broad principle of giving to every man his own, and we shall immediately get rid of all the perplexities to which the narrow notions of partiality and exclusion must ever be subject. In the digesting a plan upon this noble foundation, we shall not find any difficulty that the most common understanding and pains will not easily surmount. It does not require half the ingenuity of a common tax bill; and as a proof of this assertion, I myself drew the form of a Bill for this purpose, which I presented to the House of Lords in 1780; not as a perfect work, but merely to shew how easily the objections to the practicability of the plan, and the inconveniencies that are suggested, might be got over.

I believe the sending you a copy of my Bill will be the best way of explaining its operations. I have not one ready at this moment, but it shall soon follow this letter.

I shall therefore only mention at present a few of its provisions, which I think entirely remove the most plausible objections that have been urged against it.

The present number of Members in the House of Commons is preserved, so that all apprehensions from too numerous an assembly ceases.

An account of the whole number of males of age in the kingdom is to be taken, and divided by the number of members to be sent, which will find the quota of electors to chuse one member. From the best accounts I can now get, it will be about two thousand six hundred. These are to be formed into districts or boroughs, from the most contiguous parishes, and by having all the elections throughout the kingdom

in one and the same day, and taken in each parish, all fear of riots and tumults vanishes.

The great expence of elections, which arises chiefly from the cost of conveying electors to the place of poll, and entertaining them there and on the road, will be no more, when every man will vote in his own parish. Bribery must entirely cease: In a single borough it would be difficult; on so many as to have any effect, impossible! The numbers to be bought would be infinitely too great for any purse. Besides, annual Parliaments, by their frequency and by their shortness, would doubly operate in preventing corruption.

The vast expence of Petitions to Parliament, on account of illegal returns, would be reduced almost to nothing. The points on which these contests generally turn, are the qualifications of the electors, under the numberless restrictions the present laws have imposed, which require the attendance of witnesses, the production of records, and are subject to infinite dispute. But when no other qualification shall be necessary, but that of being a British subject, and of age, there can be but little left to contend upon as to the right of electors to vote. All other questions that could afford ground for a Petition, would be trifling, and might be decided in one day.

Many other objections are obviated by the Bill, but it is needless here to mention them. But there is another sort of objection, against which no provision can be made, as it is merely imaginary. It is feared by some, that the influence of power and riches will give to the Aristocracy so great a lead in these elections, as to place the whole government in their hands. Others again dread, that when paupers and the lowest orders of the People shall have an equal vote with the first commoner in the kingdom, we shall fall into all the confusion of a Democratic Republic. The contrariety of these two apprehensions, might of itself be a sufficient proof that neither extreme will take place. It is true, that the poorest man in the kingdom will have an equal vote with the first, for the choice of the person to whom he trusts his all, and I think he ought to have that equal degree of security against oppression. It is also true, that men of superior fortunes will have a superior degree of weight and influence, and I think, that as education and knowledge generally attend property, those who possess them ought to have weight and influence with the more ignorant. But the essential difference will be, that although the People may be led, they cannot then be driven. Property will have its weight, as it ever must have in all Governments; and I conceive that in this Plan, it will precisely find its just proportion combined with talents and character. A man of great property that is beloved and esteemed, will, as he ought, have the greatest sway; BUT TYRANNY AND OPPRESSION, THOUGH ATTENDED WITH RICHES, MAY BE RESISTED, AND WILL NO LONGER BE ATTENDED WITH A BURGAGE TENURE AT COMMAND.

Another subject of apprehension is, that the principle of allowing to every man an equal Right to vote, tends to EQUALITY in other respects, and to level property. To me it seems to have a direct contrary tendency. *The equal Rights of Men to security from Oppression, and to the enjoyments of LIFE AND LIBERTY*, strike me as perfectly compatible with their unequal shares of industry, labour, and genius, which are the origin and inequality of fortunes. The equality and inequality of men are both founded in nature; and whilst we do not confound the two, and only support her establishments, we cannot err. The pro-

tection of property appears to me one of the most essential ends of society; and so far from injuring it by this Plan, I conceive it to be the only means of preserving it, for the present system is hastening with great strides to a perfect **EQUALITY IN UNIVERSAL POVERTY.**

It has been said, that this Plan of extending the right of voting to every individual, creates much uneasiness in the minds of quiet and well-disposed persons; and that if paupers, vagabonds, and persons of no property were left out, there would be no objection to extend it to all householders and persons paying taxes, and that the same division into districts might take place. My answer is, that I know of no man, let him be ever so poor, who in his consumption of food, and use of raiment, does not pay taxes; and that I would wish to encourage an enthusiasm for his country in the breast of every subject, by giving him his **JUST SHARE** in its Government. I readily admit, that such an alteration would be a vast improvement; but I must prefer the adhering rigidly to a self-evident principle, especially when attended with no inconvenience in the execution that I can foresee. Besides, we should again fall into the difficulties of drawing the line of separation, and into the disputes about qualification.

The apprehensions that our Government will become too Democratic, have been urged upon another ground. It has been said, that the House of Commons has usurped the whole power of government; that the Crown in reality no longer possesses its negative, and must in all things be ruled by the House of Commons; that the House of Lords, in consequence of its exclusion (by the will of the House of Commons, not by law) from interfering in money bills, no longer in fact exercises the functions of a branch of the Legislature; that the only means by which the balance of the Constitution is now in any degree preserved, is by the irregular influence of the Crown, and of the Peers in the House of Commons; and that if they are totally excluded from interference there, as it is supposed will be the case if this bill passes, and are not restored to their original share of power, the equilibrium will be destroyed, and the government become purely Democratic.

To remedy the objection, it has been answered by others, that it is but just and reasonable, and that they mean at the same time that the Commons are restored to their Rights, that the Crown and the Peers should recover theirs.

This answer has been ridiculed, in my opinion, with more wit than solidity of argument. It has been represented as admitting, that whilst the House of Commons continues corrupt, the King and Lords should submit to its decisions; but that when it should really speak the voice of the People, then it would be right to revive the dormant powers of resisting it.

For my part, I agree in opinion with those who are for restoring to all parts of the state their **JUST RIGHTS** at the same time; to do it generally, not partially, is what I must contend for. At the same time, I admit that I am not for restoring the negative of the Crown; my reason is, that it appears to me preposterous that the will of one man should for ever obstruct every regulation which all the rest of the nation may think necessary. I object to it, as I would to any other prerogative of the Crown, or privilege of the Lords or People, that is not founded on reason.

But I agree, that if the House of Commons was reduced to its natural dependence on the People alone, and the present system of making it
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the exclusive part of government was continued; we should approach to a pure Democracy, more than our Constitution warrants, or than I wish to see. I am not for a Democratic, any more than for an Aristocratic or Monarchic Government solely; I am for that admirable mixture of the three that our inimitable and comprehensive Constitution has established. I wish to see the executive part of government revert to where the Constitution has originally placed it, in the hands of the Crown, to be carried on by its Ministers: Those Ministers, under the Controul of the People. I would not have Parliament made, as it daily is, a party concerned in every act of state, whereby it becomes the executive, for which it is not calculated, and loses its superintending and controuling power, which is the main end of its institution; for when the two Houses are previously pledged by addresses, votes, and resolutions, it becomes extremely difficult for them afterwards to censure measures, in which they have been so deeply engaged by acts of their own. Another great inconveniency arises from Parliament's taking so much of the executive of Government on itself, which is the excessive length of the Sessions; an evil which of late has greatly increased. Now that Parliament is engaged in every detail in order to screen the Minister, it can never finish its business till the middle of summer, when the independent country gentleman, tired of a long attendance, and hot weather, in town, is retired to his private business in the country, and that of the public left to be settled in thin Houses, by a few dependants of the Minister. A short Session of two or three months, would be sufficient to examine the expenditure of former grants, to make new ones, to redress grievances, and pass such general laws as circumstances might require. The inconveniency and expence to a private Member of Parliament in attending his duty, would then be trifling; and instead of forty Commoners and three Peers to form a quorum to decide the greatest matters of State, the attendance of two-thirds of each body, which would give respect to their proceedings, might and ought to be required.

I am also free to own my opinion, that when the House of Lords shall be effectually prevented from having any influence in the House of Commons, as I think it must by this bill, it should at the same time recover its equal right in every respect with the House of Commons, as a co-ordinate branch of the Legislature.

These sentiments are, I think, consonant to the idea so well expressed in your letter to the volunteer army of the province of Ulster, "to restore to the Crown its original splendor, to Nobility its ancient privileges, and to the Nation at large its inherent Rights."

I believe I have now troubled you with all that is necessary concerning my Plan. My Bill will shew the detail, as far as concerns the House of Commons, and the election of Scotch Peers; the regulations for restoring to the Crown its executive, and to the House of Lords its deliberative functions, should be added to, and form a part of this Bill; but I have not as yet had time and leisure to prepare them.

In what I have said, I have shewn my opinion concerning the 1st, 3^d, 4th, 6th, and 8th questions you have proposed to me. There remain the 2^d, 5th, and 7th, to be considered.

In respect to the second, which I presume relates to the admission of Roman Catholics to vote at elections, I can only say that the same principles which go to Civil Liberty, equally lead to liberty of conscience. I admire with you the glorious spirit of toleration, which, you say, has united the once distracted inhabitants of Ireland into one indissoluble

mass;

mass; and I am sure that nothing short of evident danger to the State can warrant its interference in religious opinions. But, unacquainted as I am with the state of Ireland, it is impossible for me to know the present temper and disposition of the Roman Catholics there; and those only who are on the spot can judge how far exclusions of this sort are necessary, or ought to extend.

With regard to the fifth question, if voting by ballot is advisable?—I am clearly of opinion that it is not. The idea of a ballot can have arisen but to avoid the effect of some improper influence; and I conceive it much more noble, directly to check that influence, than indirectly to evade it, by concealment and deceit. I am convinced that trivial circumstances in things like this tend greatly to form the national character, and that it is most consistent with that of a British, or Irish freeman, that all his actions should be open and avowed, and that he should not be ashamed of declaring in the face of his country whom he wishes to intrust with its interests. Upon the same idea that ballots may be a cover for independence, they must also be a cloak for bribery, and a school for lying and deceit.

As to the 7th question, whether it would not be equitable or expedient that Boroughs, now in the possession of individuals, should be purchased by the nation?

I think that although no man can have a strict claim in equity to be refunded the loss of what neither buyer nor seller had a right to barter, yet it will be wise to purchase the good will, or at least to soften the resistance of the present powerful possessors of Boroughs, by a most ample compensation. The Liberties of a nation cannot be bought too dear, but the whole cost of these boroughs would not amount to the profits of one jobbing contract.

I have now answered all the questions you have been pleased to propose, but I must mention another advantage which ought to recommend the measures you are pursuing to every friend to the internal peace and quiet of the kingdom; which is, that when the people have obtained a regular, legal, and speedy way of giving effect to their sentiments, there can no longer be any apprehension of their endeavouring to redress themselves by mobs and tumults; and even such regular and well-conducted meetings as yours will become needless. I mention this circumstance with the more satisfaction, as it stamps your conduct with the most unequivocal marks of disinterested patriotism. Power, when once acquired, is generally endeavoured to be preserved by its possessors; but you, after having taken up yours from necessity, and employed it usefully, are now endeavouring, with unexampled virtue, to render its continuance unnecessary. For great as your services have been, in so soon forming a compleat army, in the advantages you have procured for your country, in the good order you have preserved, and in the efficacy you have given to law, you will derive still greater credit, in my opinion, from your good sense in seeing that a great military force totally unconnected with the civil government cannot be a permanent establishment in a free country, whose first principle is, NEVER TO TRUST ABSOLUTE POWER IN ANY HANDS WHATEVER. Your present endeavours to restore the Constitution to its purity and vigour evidently tend to make this and every extraordinary institution unnecessary; for when the People are fairly and equally Represented in Parliament, when they have annual opportunities of changing their Deputies, and through them of controuling every abuse of government in a safe, easy, and legal

legal way, there can be no longer any reason for recurring to those ever dangerous though sometimes necessary expedients of an armed force, which nothing but a bad government can justify. Such a magnanimous end to your proceedings, when, after having restored liberty, commerce, and free government to your country, you shall voluntarily retire to the noble character of private citizens, peaceably enjoying the blessings you have procured, will crown your labours with everlasting glory, and is worthy the genuine patriotic spirit which animates the Irish Volunteers.

Before I conclude, I beg leave to express a wish, that the mutually essential connection between Great Britain and Ireland may soon be settled on some liberal and fair footing. That which did subsist was on such narrow and absurd principles that no friend to either kingdom can regret its loss. Founded on constraint and dependence, incompatible with the condition of freemen, Ireland had an indisputable right to dissolve it whenever she chose so to do. But surely, if we do not mean a total separation, it would be right to agree upon some new terms by which we are to continue connected. I have always thought it for the interest of the two islands to be incorporated and form one and the same kingdom, with the same legislature meeting sometimes in Ireland as well as in England: but if there are difficulties to such an Union not to be got over at present, some sort of *federal Union* at least between the two kingdoms seems necessary to ascertain the many circumstances that concern their joint interests; and an Union of this sort may now be formed with much greater propriety than before, as it will be sanctified by the free consent of independent nations.

I do conceive that some step of this sort is absolutely necessary, because the present footing, of separation rather than union, is too unfair to be able long to subsist. England, besides the load of the whole debt contracted for the use of both kingdoms, bears all the burden of naval defence and foreign negotiations, and by far more than its proportion of the land service in time of war. But what is worse, is, that there is no certainty now left that we shall have the same enemies and the same friends; different interests, as they may appear, may lead one kingdom to think a war necessary, and the other to remain in peace: the same King in the different kingdoms, may think it wise to follow the advice of his respective Parliaments: I need scarcely add, that the unavoidable consequences of such a difference are a war between the two kingdoms. Unless some settlement takes place upon these and many other important subjects, I am far from being clear that it will be for the advantage of liberty in either kingdom, that its Monarch should continue the sovereign of a neighbouring state with which it has no connection. I am sensible that there are great difficulties attending the adjustment of such an union, and that it requires great wisdom and temper to form it, especially on the part of Ireland; which must feel that she ought to give the preponderance to Great Britain; but I am sure the business ought not to be neglected, and that every true friend to both kingdoms ought to give it his most zealous assistance.

I beg pardon for having gone into a subject not immediately belonging to that upon which you have desired my opinion; but I thought it so connected with it, and at the same so important, that I trust you will excuse my having introduced it. I fear I have been very long, but it was impossible for me to compress so much matter into a few compass, and when you wished to have my opinion, I thought it best to give it fully,

fully, or at least as fully as I could in a letter. If it contains one thought that can be useful, I shall be happy. I have only to assure the Committee of the zeal I feel for the cause the Volunteers have undertaken, to the support of which I shall ever be ready to give every assistance in my power, and that it is with the highest respect and admiration for their conduct, that I have the honour to be their most obedient, and most humble servant,

RICHMOND, &c.

Aug. 15, 1783.

To Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman.

To Mr. HENRY JOY, Junior, Secretary of the Committee of Correspondence, at Belfast.

Burton Hall, near Bedal, Aug. 22, 1783.

SIR,

ACCORDING to your desire, my answer to the queries of the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast, was transmitted to Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman, at Lisburn, on the 12th instant. But wishing to guard against a miscarriage, which in the hurry of a general election may be possible, I take the liberty to trouble you with a duplicate of my answer.

The Committee of Yorkshire is expected to meet about the end of September; when your letters, and the other papers communicated by your respectable Committee, will be laid before the Yorkshire gentlemen. I am firmly persuaded they will rejoice at the NOBLE SPIRIT OF REFORMATION which has arisen in IRELAND; they will sincerely wish to their worthy fellow-subjects, complete success: I trust also, they will be ready to co-operate with them in any LEGAL MODE which can be devised, mutually to assist each other in the laudable and necessary undertaking, to obtain a SUBSTANTIAL REFORMATION IN PARLIAMENT, in the respective kingdoms of IRELAND and GREAT-BRITAIN. I am, Sir, with great respect, your most obedient humble servant,

C. WYVILL.

Mr. WYVILL's Answer to the Queries proposed to him by the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast.

1. In all attempts by a free people to IMPROVE the frame of their LEGISLATURE, it seems advisable, as much as may be possible, to preserve ancient foundations, and to suffer every part of the fabric to stand, which is not absolutely incapable of substantial repair. In my opinion, it is unnecessary and inexpedient to disfranchise the populous Boroughs in Ireland, in which the right of election is invested in a few persons. In such Boroughs, a DUE EXTENSION of the RIGHT of SUFFRAGE is sufficient to obtain every desirable purpose; but all the little DEPOPULATED BOROUGHs OUGHT CERTAINLY TO BE DISFRANCHISED; and THEIR PRIVILEGE OF PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED, to oppose those populous districts which are UNREPRESENTED, or whose share of representation is INADEQUATE.

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2. If, in consequence of the proposed disfranchisement of the smallest class of Boroughs, a sufficient share of the representation can be transferred to the largest districts, it does not seem necessary that the number of the Irish House of Commons should be increased. The liberty of the nation may be well protected by a House of Commons, whose members do not exceed three hundred; if those members be FIRMLY CONNECTED WITH THE BODY OF THE NATION. But if from the paucity of Boroughs proper to be disfranchised, or from the INFLUENCE OF POWERFUL MEN interested to preserve such Boroughs, a sufficient share of the representation cannot be transferred to the larger districts; the present number of the House of Commons in Ireland, compared with the elective body, is by no means so large as to forbid any addition of members. For what secures a Parliament in the interest of the public? —DUE ELECTION, AND A SPEEDY RETURN INTO THE COMMON MASS.—A Senate thus constituted would instantly feel what the community felt, and faithfully act according to the wishes of their Constituents. These are the essential requisites in the formation and conduct of a House of Commons; and where they are found it is of little moment whether the assembly consists of three hundred persons, or of any larger number, not exceeding those limits, beyond which it is not easy to preserve order in a deliberative assembly. On these grounds it may be presumed, that no solid objection to an augmentation of the Irish House of Commons could be offered, even if the present elective body were incapable of increase. But since the time is perhaps arrived, or may not be very distant, when the *Catholics of Ireland might be safely admitted a participation in the Right of Election*, the difficulty wholly vanishes.

III. Where property is very unequally distributed, aristocratical influence will be found to operate extensively; and no means can be devised completely to guard the community against the mischievous consequences of that influence, without a breach in the laws of property, which hardly ever can be justifiable. But regulations may be framed, by which the danger from the excessive power of the aristocracy may be averted; and in some tolerable degree that share of influence may be obtained by the people, without which they cannot possess a FREE constitution, or have any substantial security that the true interests of the nation will be steadily pursued by government. Laws EXTENDING THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE to fit classes of men; PROHIBITING BRIBERY AND EXPENCE AT ELECTIONS; and FACILITATING THE VOTERS ACCESS TO THE PLACE OF POLING; those are the most obvious and effectual means by which the Commons may be protected against a domineering Aristocracy, without referring to the desperate expedient of an Agrarian law. And since the counties of Ireland are inadequately represented, and since the natural luxury of the rich, and the growing industry of the poor, will combine to lessen the evil complained of, it seems advisable that *the county representation should be reinforced*, and at the same time that every proper regulation to *check the excess of aristocratical influence*, should be introduced.

IV. The fourth query has been in some measure answered in the reply to the third. It seems not to admit a doubt, that the RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE should be extended to Ireland. But the difficult part of the question is, to whom? Conscious I am how delicate the subject

is, I cannot, however, decline to give my sentiments upon it with plainness and unreserved sincerity.

It is **THE RIGHT OF MANKIND TO BE GOVERNED BY THEIR OWN CONSENT**, given personally, or by representation. On this principle all just government has been originally formed. It was the principle on which our Saxon ancestors founded their constitution; and though it must be admitted, that from the first introduction of a deputed assembly of the people in England, the principle never was strictly adhered to, and that in fact the **RIGHT of ELECTION** was not universally enjoyed, even before the statute of disfranchisement passed in the eighth year of Henry the Sixth, yet the principle was still appealed to, and by a legal fiction supposed to exist in practice.

Such was the happy **EQUALITY OF MANKIND** in the earlier stages of society, ill exchanged, in my opinion, for the glare and glitter of a more splendid scene, where the lots of the political happiness of the many is poorly compensated by the pomp and magnificence of a few individuals.

In countries where property is equally divided, or nearly so, it can hardly be supposed that the **UNLIMITED RIGHT of SUFFRAGE** may not be established. If such an exception to all political experience should occur, the circumstances which could occasion the limitation, must be of a very extraordinary nature. But in states where property has been distributed with considerable inequality, some diminution of popular privileges has usually taken place: and in far the greatest part of the globe, where the extreme of riches and poverty almost divide each community, those privileges have been trampled under the foot of their tyrannical rulers, and scarcely a vestige of them is to be found; even in these free countries of Ireland and Britain, there seems to have been a culpable propensity to contract these rights to a degree for which there was no sufficient reason. The interests of mankind require that the basis of society should be broad; the rules of justice require that their **NATURAL RIGHTS** should not be taken away, but upon proof of misusage, or political delinquency. I am satisfied, therefore, that where the right of Universal Suffrage has not been found actually inconsistent with the public safety, it ought not to be abridged. But in all cases where the claims of individuals are incompatible with the public good, the privileges of a part of the community must be postponed to the welfare of the whole. For the law of self-preservation is to societies, as to individuals, an indefeasible law; and by that law societies are justifiable which eject the full employment of the rights of citizens, persons to whom those rights could not be continued without danger to the public. The election franchise may be considered as both a privilege and a trust; and men who have been found incapable of executing that trust, in a manner advantageous to the community, are unfit to remain invested with it. That trust may be as properly taken from such men, as by the concession of the advocates for its widest extension, it may be withheld from women, minors, and persons of some other descriptions. But men from whom this franchise has been taken, ought to be permitted to renounce their allegiance to the state, and to transfer it to another. If, in this case, they acquiesce, under the deprivation, without renouncing their allegiance to the state, or even expressing any dissatisfaction, their acquiescence would amount to a tacit acceptance of virtual representation; and they would still be governed, as they ought to be, by their own consent.

In communities in which this deprivation has already taken place, similar reasoning will determine to what classes of men the election franchise ought to be restored, or may be justly refused. It ought to be restored to all who may be reasonably expected to exercise it for the public good. This is indisputably clear; and it seems equally certain that it may be justly refused to all to whom it would be unsafe to impart it; whom candour would judge most likely to misuse their privilege, and to be guilty of that political delinquency for which their original deprivation would be justifiable.

Those observations are alike applicable to the case of Britain, and of Ireland. In both countries numerous classes of men have been **DEPRIVED OF THIS FRANCHISE**, but the liberal temper of the times, aided in each by some favourable concomitant circumstances, has brought *this question to a serious discussion*; **WHAT RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT OF ELECTION OUGHT TO BE PROPOSED, OR IS FIT TO BE ESTABLISHED?** The mere inequality of property alone, is by no means a valid objection to the most extensive restoration. For if, from the love of order, justice, and liberty, prevalent in the lower classes, and the meek and unambitious spirit of superiors, no material danger were to be apprehended from the influence of a wealthy aristocracy, or from numerous and frequent assemblies of the populace; in such circumstances, notwithstanding the unequal division of property, the Right of Suffrage might be **SAFELY RESTORED** to the exclusive classes, and therefore it **OUGHT NOT TO BE REFUSED**.

Whether Ireland be a country thus fortunately circumstanced, or not, it behoves the delegates of Ulster to consider with strict impartiality. In what degree the manners of the Irish people are corrupt, to what extent the property of their country is unequally distributed, the delegates will be most competent to judge. But if aristocratical power be found too predominant in the counties of Ireland, under the present limitations of the right of election, as it is stated to be in the letter of the 19th of July, by the Committee of Belfast, the extension of the right to persons in a situation of absolute dependence on the great, would render their power wholly irresistible. If the capital contain a numerous and profligate populace, the periodical assemblies of that populace for the purpose of elections, would too probably produce tumults, and all the wild and pernicious effect of frantic insurrection. Evils like these would be more intolerable, than those abuses which are now so justly complained of; and unless some effectual remedy were speedily applied to them, would lead Ireland through a series of calamity, to the utter ruin of its constitution.

Prefuming Ireland to be a country nearly in this situation, I cannot venture to recommend the restoration of universal suffrage. In my opinion the circumstances here described must be considerably altered, before the refusal of that unlimited privilege can be thought unjust. At present, the utmost length to which the right of election there seems safely communicable, is to impart it to *every class of men, who from the possession of property to some small amount, may be thought likely to exercise their franchise freely, and for the public good*. To concede the right of suffrage in Ireland beyond that boundary, appears not consistent with national prudence, or the safety of the public; and therefore, in my apprehension is not required by justice. In this opinion I am countenanced by the general practice of the free states of antiquity; I am supported

supported by that of modern Europe, and the more recent example of America. In the American Republics, property is more equally divided, and the manners of the people are more simple, orderly, and incorrupt, than they are in these kingdoms. And yet in some of them qualification of property has been thought necessary to intitle inhabitants to the rights of voting. In Massachusetts, and some other American states, the landed qualification exceeds that of any English freeholder. —I should be still farther confirmed in these sentiments, if the excluded classes discovered no anxiety to regain this important privilege, even when it became the subject of national debate. For why should the work of **POLITICAL REFORMATION** be loaded with great, and perhaps insurmountable difficulties, by struggling to impart to the non-electors, a franchise which they are neither likely to exercise with discretion, nor solicitous to obtain?

By the rule here suggested, all persons paying taxes within the counties, cities and boroughs of Ireland, would be comprehended among their voters; and to the county electors also would be added persons holding land by copyhold, by leasehold for life, or a term exceeding thirty years, equal in value to the present freehold qualifications.

By the same rule it is understood, that Catholics of a similar qualification in property, would be admitted to the choice of representatives, together with their Protestant brethren.

It must be confessed, that this concession to humanity and liberal policy, could not be proposed in Britain with any prospect of success. But Ireland, by granting a complete toleration to Catholics, has displayed the true spirit of candour and equity. And on this great occasion of **REFORMING ITS CONSTITUTION**, the same equitable spirit will naturally lead that country not to exclude those men from **THE PRIMARY RIGHT OF CITIZENS**, by whose assistance its own independence and dignity were obtained. The Catholics of former ages may have been justly degraded from the class of electors, because an attachment to a foreign Potentate, dangerous to the peace and welfare of their country, may then have formed an essential part of their religious creed. But why should men, whose religious opinions are now deemed inoffensive to the state, and therefore fit to be tolerated by law, be thought unfit to concur with their fellow-citizens in the election of representatives? The established religion would be secure as it is at present; because Catholic voters could not elect Catholic representatives. However their mode of Christianity may be disapproved, however necessary it may be to oppose the re-admission of that system, as the religion of our country, and no person disapproves it more completely, or would resist its establishment more strenuously, than the writer of this paper; yet surely in mere matters of civil concern, the profession of errors allowed to be harmless to the state, ought not to be a disqualification.—Surely Christians of every sect ought to be permitted to enjoy those political privileges, from which persons untingered by any religion are not excluded.

If, on this occasion, the right of suffrage should be extended to Catholics, let them receive the indulgence not from the insidious clemency of a Court, but from the friendship and magnanimity of their Protestant fellow-subjects, and the peace and liberty of Ireland will be unhurt by the concession.

V. Elections by ballot seem to be unadvisable. In places where no undue influence can be exerted, the concealment of the ballot is totally unnecessary.

unnecessary. But where the influence is predominant, it ought to be resisted, not by a practice encouraging cowardly dissingenuity and breach of promise, but by open and honourable means; by means consonant with truth, integrity, and the courageous spirit of liberty.

VI. THE DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS OUGHT TO BE LIMITED TO A SHORTER TERM THAN EIGHT YEARS. If it should be found as practicable to obtain ANNUAL as TRIENNIAL PARLIAMENTS, the preference in point of efficacy seems due to Annual Parliaments. But the beneficial effect of Triennial, or of Annual Parliaments will not be felt till *the Representation has been meliorated, and ELECTIONS have been rendered UNCORRUPT AND INEXPENSIVE.*

VII. It would be expedient that a *satisfactory compensation* should be given by the nation to the Proprietors of those Boroughs which may be abolished. If this were understood to be the intention of the public, a less animated opposition to the disfranchisement of boroughs might be expected. But a more harsh mode of Reformation would disgust and exasperate individuals, which would be extremely imprudent, when a slight expence to the whole kingdom might purchase their acquiescence, and preserve general harmony.

Undoubtedly a compensation is what strict justice does not enjoin; the nation has an absolute right to revoke privileges which are become injurious to its welfare; but in the view of equity, as well as that of policy, this more lenient mode of correcting abuses which time has introduced, without any marked criminality of the present Proprietors, seems to be preferable.

VIII. From the answers which have been returned to the former queries, my opinion respecting the eighth and last query, in some measure might be collected. But the reply to the most important question of them all, shall not be less explicit than those which have been already given. If then I had the honour to be delegated to attend the meeting at Dungannon, my present ideas on the subject would lead me,

1. To recommend with all possible earnestness, the **ABOLITION OF EVERY SMALL AND DECAYED BOROUGH**; and the gift of a reasonable compensation to every person immediately affected by that act, with permission to the disfranchised electors to vote at elections for their respective counties.

2. To propose the **REINFORCEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATION**, by transferring to the counties, the capital, and the considerable unrepresented towns, if there be any such in Ireland, the members taken from the disfranchised boroughs, and also by adding to them as many new members, as might be necessary clearly to turn the balance of Legislative Power in favour of the counties, principal cities and towns, which form the body of the nation, and in which the strength of the Irish Democracy resides.

3. To suggest the utility of **EXTENDING THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE** to all persons paying taxes to counties, cities, and boroughs; to all copyholders, and leaseholders for life, or a term exceeding thirty years, the yearly value of whose estates shall be at least forty shillings; and also the propriety of admitting Christians of every denomination to the equal exercise of the most important **RIGHT OF A CITIZEN**,

4. To advise a **SHORTER DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS**, preferring **ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS** to **TRIENNIAL**, if equally attainable.

5. And

5. And for securing the advantages of those measures, in their full extent, to recommend the strictest prohibition of **BRIBERY AND EXPENCE AT ELECTIONS**, and regulations facilitating to the respective voters the exercise of their franchise.

Such are the **IMPROVEMENTS** which appear to my mind most practicable, safe, and efficacious, in the present State of Ireland.—**TO RESTORE TO THE PEOPLE, UNARMED, THEIR JUST AND NECESSARY CONTROUL OVER THE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY.**

To some of the Delegates at Dungannon, these propositions might appear not extensive enough. To many more, perhaps, they might appear too extensive to be at once adopted with prudence.

Having, therefore, offered these propositions to the meeting, I should think it ill became me to adhere to them with pertinacity. On the contrary, it would be most suitable to my very limited experience and imperfect knowledge of Irish affairs, and also more conducive to the success of the **GREAT CAUSE**, to submit my opinion with deference to better informed judgments, and to accede to a less extensive plan for a substantial **REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT**; in favour of which a more general concurrence of the Volunteers might be probable. For that is the best Plan of Reformation, which is the most effectual that is like to be attained.

The means for obtaining those regulations, or other improvements, which may be deemed more salutary, are sufficiently obvious; to restore a declining constitution, is the duty, the interest, and the peculiar office of the collective body. Self-reformation is as odious a task to corrupt assemblies of men, as it is to profligate individuals. A degenerate Parliament will never seriously engage in that business, but from the impulse of the People. By their active zeal, the work of **REFORMATION** must be begun; by their firmness and perseverance it must be finished. In a more tolerable condition of Parliament, it would be sufficient to state an abuse; and of its own accord an **HONEST** House of Commons would immediately apply the proper correction. But when the mischief lies in the frame and disposition of Parliament itself, it behoves the People not only to specify their grievance, but to point out on what principle, and to what extent they expect redress.—For, if the popular complaint be well founded, Parliament cannot be qualified to judge for the People with due impartiality; nor indisposed spontaneously to grant that mode of Reformation which may appear best adapted to promote their happiness. Hence proceeds the principal difficulty of this great enterprise. When the claim of independence was the object of pursuit, there was but one simple proposition—every Irishman was agreed. If the Volunteer Assemblies should deliberate apart on the general question only, *Whether a REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT be expedient?* there is little reason to apprehend any material diversity of opinion would arise. But if the question to be considered, should be, *What specific Plan of Reformation is most fit to be proposed to Parliament?* the discussion of that proposition in many distinct assemblies might unhappily divide the Volunteers. The **REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT** is an ample field of speculation, in which the sentiments of wise and good men may be widely different. It is a subject of the highest practical importance, on which those various sentiments may be maintained with warmth and eagerness. In the progress of those disputes, the Provincial Meetings might form different opinions; they might be heated;

heated; might be alienated; the ill offices of artful and interested men might increase the disgust; till the formation of a general opinion in favour of any specific plan, would become exceedingly difficult, if not wholly impracticable. In order to guard against so fatal disunion, it seems advisable, if the specific Plan ought to originate from the People, that a **GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES** from every part of Ireland should meet, and determine what that specific plan should be. By such a meeting the union of the Volunteers might be completely preserved; and the application from that meeting for an effectual redress of Parliamentary Abuses would be presented to Parliament with the weight and authority of the whole, collective body. It is needless to add, that their requisition **MUST** be complied with.

Such is the judgment which I have formed on the most impartial consideration of the queries transmitted for my opinion by the Committee of Belfast. I feel myself much honoured by the gentlemen who have called forth my sentiments on this momentous occasion.—By imposing that honourable task upon me, they have committed to my hands an important trust, which I am bound to execute with scrupulous fidelity, with conscientious sincerity. I am but too well convinced, that what I have been able to suggest, deserves not much of their attention. But the opinion now given has been formed, and delivered under a sense of duty. And if this communication offer nothing else, which may be fortunate enough to meet their approbation, yet I am confident the Delegates of Ulster will approve the freedom and integrity of my answer.

As a man I sincerely wish the enjoyment of liberty, in its most ample extent, to men in every climate and country; but as fellow-subjects, I am deeply and more peculiarly interested in the welfare and happiness of Irishmen. When the Volunteers of Ireland successfully asserted the honour and **INDEPENDENCE** of their country, I rejoiced at its emancipation from an injurious controul. When they abolished Persecution, and gave peace and security to millions of their oppressed brethren, my heart concurred and approved the deed. When they checked the corrupt Profusion of the Public Money, I joined with every virtuous man in applauding this prelude to a more important Reformation. To restore a sinking Constitution, is their last and greatest labour. It is a task whose difficulty can only be exceeded by the immense advantages resulting from the performance. Nothing else can give permanent security to the freedom and prosperity of Ireland. When the zeal and spirit by which the Volunteers gained those benefits to their country shall be relaxed, unless a radical **REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT** shall have been first accomplished, the benefits themselves will not be of long duration: They will be lost again, or they will be left under circumstances of public distress, in which the enjoyment will be impossible. The mischief of a factious and corrupt Government will be felt once more; Ministerial Profusion will again seduce the Senate, and impoverish the community. In this state of things, liberty will be precarious, and commerce and industry will be undone. And then, when the poor Catholic is starving for want of employment, toleration itself will be to him a comfort of little avail. Even the joy excited in the public mind by the acquisition of independence will soon sink, and be lost in the superior sense of domestic misery. But I trust a different, and far happier scene is just ready to open upon Ireland. From the vigour and virtue of Irish people, conducted by the wisdom of their Delegates, a substantial **REFORMATION OF PARLIAMENT**, with every national blessing in its train,

may

may soon be expected. Let them but persevere in the same spirited, temperate, and legal conduct, which hitherto has marked their character with honour;—**LET THEM BE FIRM—LET THEM BE UNANIMOUS;** and in this just and necessary undertaking, as in all the rest, **THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND** will command that success which they so well deserve.

C. WYVILL.

The following most important Resolutions, entered into by the DELEGATES of the VOLUNTEERS in Ireland, were unanimously agreed to.

At a Meeting of Delegates of Volunteer Corps, held at Dungannon, 8th of September, 1783, Colonel JAMES STEWART, of the Tyrone Regiment, in the Chair, the following Resolutions were unanimously entered into:

I. Resolved unanimously, That **FREEDOM** is the **INDEFEASIBLE BIRTH-RIGHT** of Irishmen and Britons, derived from the Author of their being; and of which no **POWER ON EARTH, MUCH LESS A DELEGATED POWER,** hath a right to deprive them.

II. Resolved unanimously, That **THEY ONLY**, are free, who are governed by no **LAWS** but those to which **THEY ASSENT**, either by themselves in person, or by their Representatives *freely chosen*, subject to the **CONTROUL** and frequently **RETURNING** into the **COMMON MASS** of **CONSTITUENTS**.

III. Resolved unanimously, That the majority of our House of Commons is *NOT chosen by the People*, but returned by the Mandate of Peers or Commoners, either for indigent boroughs, where scarcely any inhabitants exist, or considerable cities and towns where the elective franchise is vested in a few; who are thus suffered to place the highest trusts of society against the interest and will of the many, in the hands of men, who seldom act as if they considered themselves accountable for their conduct to the People.

IV. Resolved unanimously, That by the ancient constitution of Parliaments, elections of Representatives were for centuries **ANNUAL**, and in many instances more frequent, and the exercise of suffrage, among freemen, **UNIVERSAL**.

V. Resolved unanimously, That every approach to those fundamental principles, tends to a **RENOVATION** of, not an **INNOVATION**, in the Constitution.

VI. Resolved unanimously, That the elective franchise, ought, of right, to extend to all those, **AND THOSE ONLY**, who are likely to exercise it for the public good.

VII. Resolved unanimously, that the present **INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION**, and the **LONG DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS**, destroy that Balance, which, by our Constitution, should subsist between the Three Estates of the Legislature; *render the Commons House independent of the People*, procure certain majorities in favour of every Administration; and threaten either an **ABSOLUTE MONARCHY**, or, that still more odious Government, a **TYRANNICAL ARISTOCRACY**.

VIII. Resolved, therefore, That **THE PRESENT IMPERFECT REPRESENTATION AND LONG DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS, ARE UNCONSTITUTIONAL, AND INTOLERABLE GRIEVANCES,**

Y

IX. Resolved

-IX. Resolved unanimously, That as the voice of the Commons of Ireland is no less necessary for every legislative purpose, than that of either the King or Lords, *the People have a just and inherent RIGHT to correct the Abuses of Representation*, whenever such abuses shall have so increased, as to rob them of their constitutional share in their own Government.

X. Resolved unanimously, That it is the INTEREST of Parliament itself to effect a substantial REFORM, as the very existence of that assembly must become precarious when it shall lose the confidence of the People, to whom originally it owed its creation, and from whom alone its powers were derived.

XI. Resolved unanimously, That WE SOLEMNLY PLEDGE OURSELVES to each other and our country, to seek a SPEEDY AND EFFECTUAL REDRESS OF THESE OUR GRIEVANCES, and to co-operate with our fellow-subjects, in every exertion necessary to obtain it.

We call for the aid of every upright Senator; of every man, whether in Ireland or Great Britain, who bears or wishes to acquire the title of a Freeman!

XII. Resolved unanimously, That we have attended with admiration to the noble, though hitherto ineffectual efforts, of those illustrious characters and virtuous citizens, who, in England and Scotland, strenuously labour to procure redress of similar grievances. May the example of the sister nations, mutually animate the inhabitants of each to persevere with unremitting ardour, until the glorious labour be finally completed.

XIII. Resolved unanimously, That a Committee of five persons from each county, be now chosen by ballot, to represent this province in a grand NATIONAL CONVENTION to be held at noon in the Royal Exchange, Dublin, on the 10th day of November next; to which we trust each of the other provinces will send Delegates, to digest and publish a PLAN of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM—to pursue such measures as may appear to them most likely to render it effectual; to adjourn from time to time, and to convene provincial meetings, if found necessary.

XIV. Resolved unanimously, That it be an instruction to said Committee, that the Delegates from each county do prepare, and carry with them to the National Convention, an account of all the cities, towns and boroughs in this province; the mode of election in such as at present return members; as near as may be the proportionate number of Protestant and Roman Catholic inhabitants in each; and a conjecture of their comparative properties.

XV. Resolved unanimously, That we are decided in opinion, that the Representatives of the People ought not in future to consent to any Bill of Supply for a longer term than twelve months: nor more than six months, until a complete redress of the aforesaid grievances be obtained.

A specific PLAN of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM being produced and read by the Committee of Correspondence,

Resolved unanimously, That said plan be referred to the consideration of the National Convention.

The Address of the first regiment of the Irish Brigade, to the Chairman of this Association, on the 15th of Feb. 1782, being read:

Resolved unanimously, That this Association entertain the most grateful sense of the approbation of that respectable body; that we rejoice in the accession of, and we will be happy in co-operating with such liberal

tal and patriotic men, in effecting the complete liberty and happiness of the good people of this kingdom.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman and the Gentlemen of the Committee of Correspondence, for their great trouble in collecting information of a Parliamentary Reform, and for their ability and zeal in digesting matter for the meeting of this day.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Lord Bishop of Derry, for his attendance and assistance in the business of this day; for his warm attachment to the Volunteer cause; and for proving himself the steady friend to the liberties of Ireland upon all occasions.

Resolved unanimously, That the sincere thanks of this meeting be returned to the inhabitants of Dungannon, for their very polite conduct, and to the Dungannon battalion for their vigilant conduct when on guard this day.

Colonel Robert Stewart having taken the chair:

Resolved unanimously, that the particular thanks of this meeting be presented to Col. J. Stewart, for his very great propriety of conduct in the chair.

To the VOLUNTEER ARMIES of the Provinces of MUNSTER, LEINSTER and CONNAUGHT.

Fellow Subjects,

THE transcendent events which our united efforts have produced, present an eminent instance of the protecting hand of heaven;—whilst the progressive virtue and general union of the people, naturally prompt them to revive the spirit of an unrivalled constitution, and to vindicate the inherent *Rights of Men*.

The most important work yet remains; which neglected, our past attainments are transitory, unsubstantial, insecure!—an extension to thousands of our beloved fellow-citizens of a franchise, comprehending the very ESSENCE OF LIBERTY:—and drawing the line which precisely separates the freeman from the slave.

Suffer us, therefore, to conjure you by every endearing tie that connects man with man, with unceasing zeal to pursue one of the most glorious objects that ever agitated the human mind; a restoration of Virtue to a Senate long unaccustomed to speak the voice of the People; a renovation of the ancient balance of our government; and a firm establishment of the first gifts of nature, on the ruins of an avowed corruption, at once the bane of morals and of liberty.

From a grand *National Convention*—distinguished by integrity, and inspired with the courageous spirit of the constitution—every blessing must result.

With one voice then—the voice of united millions, let Ireland assert her *claim to Freedom*!

Through her four Provincial Assemblies let her temperate declarations flow to one common center; and there, matured into an extensive PLAN of REFORM, be produced as the solemn Act of the Volunteer Army of Ireland; as a DEMAND of RIGHTS, robbed of which the unanimated forms of a free government would be a curse; and existence itself cease to be a blessing.

Friends and Countrymen,

The eye of an enlightened world, is this instant upon us! Munster has, in part, already led the way; and millions of our fellow-subjects of Britain, in whom the flame of liberty still burns with lustre, behold with delight our exertions in the common cause; and in our success, see the certain harbinger of their own!

Let the reflection that Greece, the seat of liberty and of science; that Rome, the mistress of the world; and that innumerable states, once flourishing and free, now laying prostrate by the hand of Tyranny, teach Ireland wisdom. To our deliberate assemblies they convey awful warning to be spirited, unanimous, and firm; lest the present wretched condition of other countries be soon the fate of our own!

May the Supreme Ruler of the Universe crown his other blessings, by being present with us; by promoting union and the love of our country among all ranks of men; and by finally directing our exertions to virtue, liberty, and peace!

Copy of a Letter from Dr. PRICE to Lieut. Colonel SHARMAN, Chairman of the Committee of Correspondence, appointed by the Forty-five Volunteer Corps assembled at Lisbon on the first of July, 1783.

SIR,

I THINK myself greatly honored by the letter addressed to me in the name of the Committee of which you are Chairman. It is indeed with more satisfaction than I can express, I find that the People of Ireland, after rescuing their trade and their Legislature from the oppression of a sister kingdom, are now undertaking to rescue themselves likewise from an internal oppression, no less inconsistent with their liberty. The occasion is great, and the undertaking important and arduous in the highest degree. Should they be blessed with success, they will have completed their own happiness, and exhibited an example which will for ever shine in the annals of mankind. The subjoined paper* will shew that I have been

* *To the ARMED VOLUNTEERS of IRELAND.*

A native of England, but a citizen of the world, and a warm friend to UNIVERSAL LIBERTY, congratulates them with great satisfaction on their success in obtaining, without bloodshed, that precious blessing for which torrents of blood have been shed in America; and rejoicing in their emancipation, he wishes to propose to them the following queries:

1st, Having seized the favorable opportunity which the war with America has offered them, should they not be anxious about improving it to the utmost, from a conviction that such another opportunity may never offer itself?

2dly, Having succeeded in making themselves free externally, should it not be their concern to make themselves free internally? And while they want the one, can they possess any just security for the other?

3dly, Is not a free and equal Representation essential to the internal liberty of a kingdom?

4thly, Is Ireland possessed of such a representation? Or, is not, on the contrary, a vast majority of its House of Commons chosen, not by the People, but, as in England, by a few grandees and beggars?

5thly,

been for some time wishing they would carry their views to this object. It was shewn to Mr. Grattan above a year ago, and written when the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Shelburne, Lord Camden, Mr. Pitt, and other friends to a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, were in power.—We are now governed by an odious Coalition, formed between Whigs and the conductors of the late war, to gratify ambition and party rage, by censuring the peace. These united parties are in general hostile to *Reformation*; and this will make it more difficult for the People of Ireland to succeed in their views; but NOTHING CAN BE DIFFICULT TO A PEOPLE DETERMINED TO RECOVER THEIR RIGHTS, IF UNANIMOUS AND FIRM.—The motive commonly urged to check such exertions “not to disturb what is quiet,”—would prevent all improvements, and perpetuate darkness and slavery amongst mankind. It would, in particular, had it influenced in America, have prevented the REVOLUTION in favor of the RIGHTS OF MANKIND which has lately taken place there: and had it influenced Ireland, it would have prevented that emancipation of its Trade and Legislation, which has been lately so happily effected. The blessings of legitimate government and a free constitution are inestimable. *Too much cannot be sacrificed to possess them*; and no country possesses them where the body of the people, *equally and fairly represented*, have not the chief share in the power of government.

I can by no means pretend to that degree of information and knowledge, which is necessary to enable me to give any proper answer to the queries contained in your letter; and the shortness of the time between this and the 20th of August, together with the dissipated state I am now in at Brighthelmston, will not allow me to be very full and explicit. The Committee, will, therefore, I hope, accept the following general observations, as the best reply to their queries that I can at present give:

The *principles of Civil Liberty* require that every independent agent in a state (that is, every one who can be supposed to have a *will and judgment of his own*) should have a voice in the choice of his governors. But it has been seldom practicable to extend the right of voting so far. In America, where new forms of government are established, more liberal than any the world has yet seen, this right is limited to persons who pay taxes and possess property. Perhaps it may not be prudent in Ireland to go even this length. In these cases, to avoid *the danger of losing all by aiming at too much*, the attempts of enlightened men should be governed

5thly, By establishing an *equal Representation*, may not the People of Ireland do their sister kingdom a most important service, by provoking its emulation, and rendering it ashamed of its own CORRUPT and MOCK REPRESENTATION?

6thly, Have they not reason to expect, from the liberality of the new Ministers, and the endeavours which some of them are now using to gain an *equal Representation* of England, that they will rejoice to see this work undertaken in Ireland, and give it their encouragement and support?

Lastly, Is it not therefore almost certain, that the Volunteers and Patriots of Ireland will easily succeed in this undertaking, if they set themselves to it with that glorious zeal which they have hitherto discovered, and by which they have exhibited to the world an example of public spirit and virtue scarcely ever before known, and which must render them the admiration of future ages?

governed by a regard to what is most practicable, considering the present circumstances, and the attachment which always prevails in a country to old establishments. In England I have wished that the *Friends of Reformation* had confined their views at present to the *extension of the right of voting* to copy-holders, and lease-holders; and the substitution of a hundred knights for counties for a hundred members for boroughs. This, though in theory unspeakably too little, would have been a very important *reform*; and less than this I have not thought much worth contending for. The people in Ireland are more alive, and therefore, probably, much more may be attempted there with success. But how much more I am not qualified to say. Suppose *the right of voting was extended to all who possess property of a certain value*, and every county divided into six districts, each of which should chuse one representative, leaving the remaining representatives to be chosen by the largest towns and boroughs: Would this be too great an object? Is it too much to be undertaken without destroying unanimity?

The *Duration of Parliament* seems a point of less consequence. If chosen by the people at large, they will be *short*; for it is impossible that a people should not see that the long possession of power will corrupt, and that their *security against an abuse of power* depends on keeping their REPRESENTATIVES IN A CONSTANT STATE OF DEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

If, on the contrary, Parliaments are *not* chosen by the People, shortening their duration will be no remedy. They will not for this be less *usurpations and mockeries*.

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS seem to me preferable to Parliaments of any longer duration; not only because they keep the representative body more subject to the controul of its constituents, but also because being chosen more frequently, they will be chosen more of course, and with less tumult and riot.

There seems to be no reason for changing the number of the Representative body in Ireland.

I am so much an enemy to persecution, that I cannot help wishing the right of voting could be extended to *Papists of property*, in common with Protestants. It is UNJUST to DEPRIVE any man of his RIGHT on account of his RELIGION, unless self-defence makes it absolutely necessary. The danger from Papists is perhaps more produced by the penal laws against them, than by their religion. These detach them from the rest of the community, give them a separate interest, and make them enemies. Why should not a Papist be attached to the liberties of his country as well as a Protestant, if he is allowed to share in them? In truth, a country which allows him no right, he cannot reckon *his* country. It is nothing to him whether it is enslaved or free; nor can he care what becomes of it.

If there is any remedy for the evil which occasions the objection against increasing the number of members for counties, it is that extension of the right of voting and division of counties into districts which I have mentioned.

The Proprietors of the enslaved Boroughs do not seem, in reason, entitled to a compensation, because they hold them by *usurpation*, and a kind of *robbery*. It seems, however, necessary, that a compensation should be allowed--and this, I suppose, would be done in England, were the *ROT TEN BOROUGH*s disfranchised. The necessity of abolishing

ing such boroughs I think very apparent. There cannot be worse nuisances in a state.

I am sensible, Sir, of the great imperfection of these remarks, and must rely on the candour of the Committee. Indeed they have done me too much honor by supposing me capable of advising them. From the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, &c. they may receive advice that will be more worth their attention. But there is no one whose heart and wishes are more with them. May Heaven grant them success! and may the example of Ireland influence this country, and shame it to imitation. With all possible respect, I am, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

Brighthelmstone,

Aug. 7, 1783.

RICH. PRICE.

THE PETITION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE,

PRESENTED BY CHARLES GREY, ESQ. 1793,

Sheweth,

THAT by the form and spirit of the British Constitution, the King is vested with the sole Executive Power.

That the House of Lords, consists of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, deriving their titles and consequence either from the Crown or from Hereditary privileges.

That these two powers if they acted without controul, would form either a despotic Monarchy or a dangerous Oligarchy.

That the wisdom of our ancestors hath contrived, that these authorities may be rendered not only harmless but beneficial; and be exercised for the security and happiness of the people.

That this security and happiness are to be looked for in the introduction of a third estate, distinct from, and a check upon the other two branches of the Legislature, created by representing, and responsible to the people themselves.

That so much depending upon the preservation of this third estate, in such its Constitutional purity and strength, your petitioners are reasonably jealous of whatever may appear to vitiate the one or to impair the other.

That at the present day, the House of Commons does not fully and fairly represent the people of England, which consistently with what your petitioners conceive to be the principles of the Constitution, they consider as a grievance, and therefore, with all becoming respect lay their complaints before your honorable House.

That though the terms in which your petitioners state their grievance, may be looked upon as strong, yet your honorable House is entreated to believe, that no expression is made use of for the purpose of offence.

Your Petitioners in affirming that your honorable House is not an adequate Representation of the people of England, do but state a fact, which, if the word "Representation" be accepted in its fair and obvious sense, they are ready to prove, and which they think detrimental to their interests, and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.

How far this inadequate Representation is prejudicial to their interests, your Petitioners apprehend they may be allowed to decide for themselves,

selves, but how far it is contrary to the Spirit of the Constitution, they refer to the consideration of your Honorable House.

If your honorable House shall be pleased to determine, that the people of England ought not to be fully represented, your Petitioners pray that such your determination may be made known, to the end that the people may be apprised of their real situation; but if your honorable House shall conceive that the people are already fully represented, then your Petitioners beg leave to call your attention to the following facts:

Your Petitioners complain that the number of Representatives assigned to the different Counties is grossly disproportioned to their comparative extent, population and trade.

Your Petitioners complain that the elective Franchise is so partially and unequally distributed, and is in so many instances committed to bodies of men of such very limited numbers, that the majority of your Honorable House is elected by less than fifteen thousand electors, which even if the male adults in the kingdom be estimated at so low a number as three millions, is not more than the hundredth part of the people to be represented.

Your Petitioners complain, that the right of voting is regulated by no uniform or rational principle.

Your Petitioners complain that the Exercise of the elective Franchise is only renewed once in seven years.

Your Petitioners thus distinctly state the subject matter of their complaints, that your Honorable House may be convinced that they are acting from no spirit of general discontent, and that you may with the more ease be enabled to inquire into the facts, and to apply the remedy.

For the evidence in support of the first complaint your Petitioners refer to the Return Book of your Honorable House.—Is it fitting that Rutland and Yorkshire should bear an equal rank in the scale of County Representation, or can it be right that Cornwall alone should by its extravagant proportion of Borough Members, outnumber not only the Representatives of Yorkshire and Rutland together, but of Middlesex added to them? Or, if a distinction be taken between the landed and the trading interests, must it not appear monstrous that Cornwall and Wiltshire should send more Borough Members to Parliament, than Yorkshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Middlesex, Worcestershire, and Somersetshire united? and that the total Representation of all Scotland should but exceed by one Member, the number returned for a single County in England?

The SECOND COMPLAINT of your Petitioners, is founded on the unequal proportions in which the elective Franchise is distributed, and in support of it,

They affirm, that seventy of your Hon. Members are returned by thirty-five places, where the right of voting is vested in Burgage and other Tenures of a similar description, and in which it would be to trifle with the patience of your Honorable House, to mention any number of voters whatever; the elections of the places alluded to, being notoriously a mere matter of form. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the seventy Honorable Members so chosen, ninety more of your Honourable Members are elected by forty-six places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds fifty. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

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They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and sixty so elected, thirty-seven more of your Honorable Members are elected by nineteen places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds one hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ninety-seven Honorable Members so chosen, fifty-two more are returned to serve in Parliament, by twenty-six places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds two hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and forty-nine so elected twenty more are returned to serve in Parliament for counties in Scotland, by less than one hundred Electors each, and ten for counties in Scotland by less than two hundred and fifty each. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove, even admitting the validity of fictitious votes.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and seventy-nine so elected, thirteen districts of Burghs in Scotland, not containing one hundred votes each, and two districts of Burghs, not containing one hundred and twenty-five each, return fifteen more Honorable Members, and this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

And in this manner, according to the present state of the Representation, two hundred and ninety-four of your Honorable Members are chosen, and being a majority of the entire House of Commons, are enabled to decide all questions in the name of the whole people of England and Scotland.

The third complaint of your Petitioners is founded on the present complicated rights of voting. From the caprice with which they have been varied, and the obscurity in which they have been involved by time and contradictory decisions, they are become a source of infinite confusion, litigation and expence.

Your Petitioners need not tender any evidence of the inconveniences which arise from this defect in the Representation, because the proof is to be found in your journals, and the minutes of the different committees who have been appointed under the 10th and 11th of the King. Your Honorable House is too well acquainted with the tedious, intricate, and expensive scenes of litigation which have been brought before you, in attempting to settle the legal import of those numerous distinctions, which perplex and confound the present rights of voting. How many months of your valuable time have been wasted in listening to the wrangling of lawyers, upon the various species of Burgagehold, Leasehold, and Freehold? How many Committees have been occupied in investigating the nature of Scot and Lot, Potwallers, Commonalty, Populacy, resident Inhabitants and Inhabitants at large? What labour and research have been employed in endeavoring to ascertain the legal claims of Boroughmen, Aldermen, Portmen, Select men, Burgesses, and Council Men. And what confusion has arisen from the complicated operation of clashing Charters, from freemen resident and non-resident, and from the different modes of obtaining the freedom of Corporations by birth, by servitude, by marriage, by redemption, by election, and by purchase? On all these points, it is however, needless for your Petitioners to enlarge, when your Honorable House recollects the following facts; namely that since the twenty-second of December, one thousand, seven hundred, and ninety no less than twenty-one Committees have been employed in deciding upon litigated rights of voting. Of these eight were occupied with the disputes of three Boroughs, and there are Petitions from four places

yet remaining before your Honorable House, waiting for a final decision to inform the Electors what their rights really are.

But the complaint of your Petitioners on the subject of the want of an uniform and equitable principle in regulating the right of voting, extends as well to the arbitrary manner in which some are excluded, as to the intricate qualifications by which others are admitted to the exercise of that privilege.

Religious opinions create an incapacity to vote. All Papists are excluded generally, and by the operation of the Test Laws, Protestant Dissenters are deprived of a voice in the election of Representatives in about thirty Boroughs, where the right of voting is confined to Corporate Officers alone; a deprivation the more unjustifiable, because though considered as unworthy to vote they are deemed capable of being elected, and may be the Representatives of the very places for which they are disqualified from being the Electors.

A man possessed of one thousand pounds per annum, or any other sum arising from copyhold, leasehold for ninety-nine years, trade, property in the Public Funds, or even freehold in the city of London, and many other cities and towns having peculiar jurisdictions, is not thereby entitled to vote. Here again a strange distinction is taken between electing and representing, as a copyhold is a sufficient qualification to sit in your Honorable House.

A man paying taxes to any amount how great soever, for his domestic establishment, does not thereby obtain a right to vote, unless his residence be in some Borough where that right is vested in the inhabitants. This exception operates in sixty places, of which twenty-eight do not contain three hundred voters each, and the number of householders in England and Wales (exclusive of Scotland), who pay all taxes, are seven hundred and fourteen thousand, nine hundred and eleven, and of householders who pay all taxes, but the House and Window Taxes, are two hundred and eighty-four thousand four hundred and fifty-nine, as appears by a return made to your Honorable House, in one thousand seven hundred and eighty-five; so that even supposing the sixty places above mentioned to contain, one with another, one thousand voters in each, there will remain nine hundred and thirty-nine thousand three hundred and seventy householders who have no voice in the Representation, unless they have obtained it by accident or by purchase. Neither their contributions to the public burdens, their peaceable demeanour, as good subjects, nor their general respectability and merits, as useful citizens, afford them, as the law now stands, the smallest pretensions to participate in the choice of those, who, under the name of their Representatives, may dispose of their fortunes and liberties.

In Scotland, the grievance arising from the nature of the rights of voting has a different and still more intolerable operation. In that great and populous division of the kingdom, not only the great mass of the householders, but of the landholders also, are excluded from all participation in the choice of the Representatives. By the remains of the feudal system in the counties, the vote is severed from the land, and attached to what is called the superiority. In other words it is taken from the substance, and transferred to the shadow, because though each of these superiorities must, with very few exceptions, arise from lands of the present annual value of four hundred pounds sterling, yet it is not necessary that the lands should do more than give a name to the superiority, the possessor of which may retain the right of voting, notwithstanding he be divested of the

the property. And on the other hand, great landholders have the means afforded them, by the same system, of adding to their influence, without expence to themselves, by communicating to their confidential friends the privilege of electing Members to serve in Parliament. The process by which this operation is performed is simple. He who wishes to increase the number of his dependant votes, surrenders his charter to the Crown; and parcelling out his estate into as many lots of four hundred pounds per annum as may be convenient, conveys them to such as he can confide in. To these new charters are upon applications, granted by the Crown, so as to erect each of them into a superiority, which privilege once obtained, the land itself is reconveyed to the original grantor; and thus the Representatives of the landed interest in Scotland, may be chosen by those who have no real or beneficial interest in the land.

Such is the situation in which the counties of Scotland are placed. With respect to the burghs, every thing that bears even the semblance of popular choice has long been done away. The election of Members to serve in Parliament is vested in the Magistrates and Town Councils, who having by various innovations, constituted themselves into self-elected bodies, instead of Officers freely chosen by the inhabitants at large, have deprived the people of all participation in that privilege, the free exercise of which affords the only security they can possess for the protection of their liberties and property.

The FOURTH and LAST COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is the length of the duration of Parliaments. Your Hon. House knows, that by the ancient laws and statutes of this kingdom frequent Parliaments ought to be held, and that the sixth of William and Mary, c. 2. (since repealed) speaking while the spirit of the Revolution was yet warm, declared, that "frequent and new Parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good agreement between King and People;" and enacted, that no Parliament should last longer than for three years. Your Petitioners, without presuming to add to such an authority, by any observations of their own, humbly pray that Parliaments may not be continued for seven years.

Your Petitioners have thus laid before you the specific grounds of complaint, from which they conceive every evil in the representation to spring, and on which they think every abuse and inconvenience is founded.

What those abuses are and how great that inconvenience is, it becomes your Petitioners to state, as the best means of justifying their present application to your Honorable House.

Your Petitioners then affirm, that from the combined operation of the defects they have pointed out, arise those scenes of confusion, litigation, and expence which so disgrace the name, and that extensive system of private patronage which is so repugnant to the spirit of free Representation.

Your Petitioners intreat of your Honorable House to consider the manner in which elections are conducted, and to reflect upon the extreme inconvenience to which electors are exposed, and the intolerable expence to which candidates are subjected.

Your Honorable House knows that tumults, disorders, outrages, and perjury, are too often the dreadful attendants on contested elections as at this time carried on.

Your Honorable House knows that polls are only taken in one fixed place for each county, city and borough whether the number of voters be

ten or ten thousand, and whether they be resident or dispersed over England.

Your Honorable House knows that polls, however few the electors, may by law be continued for fifteen days, and even then be subjected to a scrutiny.

Your Honorable House knows, that the management and conduct of polls is committed to returning officers, who, from the very nature of the proceedings, must be invested with extensive and discretionary powers, and who, it appears by every volume of your journals, have but too often exercised those powers with the most gross partiality and the most scandalous corruption.

Of elections arranged with such little regard to the accommodation of the parties, acknowledged to require such a length of time to complete, and trusted to the superintendence of such suspicious agents, your Petitioners might easily draw out a detail of the expence, but it is unnecessary. The fact is too notorious to require proof, that scarce an instance can be produced where a member has obtained a disputed seat in Parliament, at a less cost than from two to five thousand pounds; particular cases are not wanting where ten times these sums have been paid, but it is sufficient for your Petitioners to affirm, and to be able to prove it, if denied, that such is the expence of a contested return, that he who should become a candidate with even greater funds than the law requires him to swear to, as his qualification to sit in your honorable House, must either relinquish his pretensions on the appearance of an opposition, or so reduce his fortune in the contest, that he could not take his seat without perjury.

The revision of the original polls before the Committees of your honorable House, upon appeals from the decisions of the returning officers, affords fresh sources of vexation and expence to all parties. Your honorable House knows that the complicated rights of voting, and the shameful practices which disgrace election proceedings, have so loaded your table with Petitions for judgment and redress, that one half of the usual duration of a Parliament has scarcely been sufficient to settle who is entitled to sit for the other half, and it was not till within the last two months that your honorable House had an opportunity of discovering that the two gentlemen, who sat and voted near three years as the Representatives of the borough of Stockbridge, had procured themselves to be elected by the most scandalous bribery, and that the two gentlemen who sat and voted during as long a period for the borough of Great Grimsby had not been elected at all.

In truth, all the mischiefs of the present system of representation are ascertained by the difficulties which even the zeal and wisdom of your honorable House experiences in attending to the variety of complaints brought before you, though your Committees sit five hours every day from the time of their appointment, they generally are unable to come to a decision in less than a fortnight, and very frequently are detained from thirty to forty days. The Westminster case in 1789, will even furnish your honorable House with an instance, where, after deliberating forty-five days, a Committee gravely resolved, that "from an attentive consideration of the circumstances relating to the cause, a final decision of the business before them could not take place in the course of the session, and that not improbably the whole of the Parliament (having at that time near two years longer to sit) might be consumed in a tedious and expensive litigation; and they recommended

"mended it to the Petitioners to withdraw their Petition;" which, after a fruitless perseverance of above three months, they were actually obliged to submit to.

Your Petitioners will only upon this subject further add, that the expence to each of the parties, who have been either plaintiff or defendant in petitions tried before your Honorable House in the present Session, has, upon an average, amounted to above one hundred pounds per day; and that the attornies bills in one cause, the trial of which in point of form only lasted two days, and in point of fact only six hours, amounted to very near twelve hundred pounds. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

Your Petitioners must now beg leave to call the attention of your Honorable House to the greatest evil produced by these defects in the representation of which they complain: namely, the extent of PRIVATE PARLIAMENTARY PATRONAGE; an abuse which obviously tends to exclude the great mass of the People from any substantial influence in the Election of the House of Commons, and which, in its progress, threatens to usurp the sovereignty of the country, to the equal danger of the King, of the Lords, and of the Commons.

The Patronage of which your Petitioners complain is of two kinds: That which arises from the unequal distribution of the Elective Franchise, and the peculiar rights of voting by which certain places return Members to serve in Parliament; and that which arises from the expence attending contested Elections, and the consequent degree of power acquired by wealth.

By these two means a weight of Parliamentary influence has been obtained by certain individuals, forbidden by the spirit of the laws, and in its consequences most dangerous to the Liberties of the People of Great Britain.

The operation of the first species of patronage is directed, and subject to positive proof. Eighty-four individuals do by their own immediate authority send one hundred and fifty-seven of your Honorable Members to Parliament. And this your Petitioners are ready, if the fact be disputed, to prove, and to name the Members and the Patrons.

The second species of patronage cannot be shewn with equal accuracy, though it is felt with equal force.

Your Petitioners are convinced, that in addition to the one hundred and fifty-seven Honorable Members above-mentioned, one hundred and fifty more, making in the whole three hundred and seven, are returned to your Honorable House, not by the collected voice of those whom they appear to represent, but by the recommendation of seventy powerful individuals, added to the eighty-four before-mentioned, and making the total number of Patrons altogether only one hundred and fifty-four, who return a decided majority of your Honorable House.

If your Honorable House will accept as evidence the common report and general belief of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, which return the Members alluded to, your Petitioners are ready to name them, and to prove the fact; or if the Members in question can be made parties to the enquiry, your Petitioners will name them, and be governed by the testimony which they themselves shall publicly give. But if neither of these proofs be thought consistent with the proceedings of your Honorable House, then your Petitioners can only assert their belief of the fact, which they hereby do in the most solemn manner, and on the most deliberate conviction.

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Your Petitioners entreat your Honorable House to believe that, in complaining of this species of influence, it is not their intention or desire to decry or to condemn that just and natural attachment which they, who are enabled by their fortune, and inclined by their disposition, to apply great means to Honorable and benevolent ends, will always insure to themselves. What your Petitioners complain of is, that property, whether well or ill employed, has equal power; that the present system of Representation gives to it a degree of weight which renders it independent of character; enables it to excite fear as well as procure respect, and confines the choice of electors within the ranks of opulence; because though it cannot make riches the sole object of their affection and confidence, it can and does throw obstacles, almost insurmountable, in the way of every man who is not rich, and thereby secures to a select few the capability of becoming Candidates themselves, or supporting the pretensions of others. Of this your Petitioners complain loudly, because they conceive it to be highly unjust, that, while the language of the law requires from a Candidate no greater estate, as a qualification, than a few hundred pounds per annum, the operation of the law should disqualify every man, whose rental is not extended to thousands; and that at the same time, that the legislature appears to give the electors a choice from amongst those who possess a moderate and independent competence, it should virtually compel them to chuse from amongst those who themselves abound in wealth, or are supported by the wealth of others.

Your Petitioners are the more alarmed at the progress of private patronage, because it is rapidly leading to consequences which menace the very existence of the Constitution.

At the commencement of every session of Parliament, your Honorable House, acting up to the laudable jealousy of your predecessors, and speaking the pure constitutional language of a British House of Commons, resolve, as appears by your journals, "That no Peer of this realm hath a right to give his Vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament," and also, "That it is a high infringement upon the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any Lord Lieutenant of any County, to concern themselves in the election of Members to serve for the Commons in Parliament."

Your Petitioners inform your Honorable House, and are ready to prove it at your bar, that they have the most reasonable grounds to suspect that no less than one hundred and fifty of your Honorable Members owe their elections entirely to the interference of Peers, and your Petitioners are prepared to shew by legal evidence, that forty Peers, in defiance of your resolutions, have possessed themselves of so many burgage tenures, and obtained such an absolute and uncontrouled command in very many small Boroughs in the kingdom, as to be enabled by their own positive authority to return eighty-one of your Honorable Members.

Your Petitioners will, however, urge this grievance of the interference of Peers in elections no further, because they are satisfied that it is unnecessary. Numbers of your Honorable Members must individually have known the fact, but collectively your Honorable House has undoubtedly been a stranger to it. It is now brought before you by those who tender evidence of the truth of what they assert; and they conceive it would be improper in them to ask that by Petition, which must be looked for as the certain result of your own honorable attachment to your own liberties and privileges.

Your Petitioners have thus laid before your Honorable House, what the mischiefs are which arise from the present state of the Representation, and what they conceive to be the grounds of those mischiefs, and therefore pray to have removed.

They now humbly beg leave to offer their reasons, why they are anxious that some remedy should be immediately applied,

Your Petitioners trust they may be allowed to state, because they are ready to prove, that seats in your Honorable House are fought for at a most extravagant and increasing rate of expence.

What can have so much augmented the ambition to sit in your Honorable House, your Petitioners do not presume actually to have discovered, but the means taken by Candidates to obtain, and by electors to bestow that honor, evidently appear to have been increasing in a progressive degree of fraud and corruption. Your Petitioners are induced to make this assertion by the legislature having found it necessary during the last and present reigns, so much to swell the statute book, with laws for the prevention of those offences.

As far as conjecture can lead your Petitioners, they must suppose, that the increased National Debt, and the consequent increase of influence, are the causes of the increased eagerness of individuals, to become Members of the House of Commons, and of their indifference as to the means used to gratify their speculations. To prove that they do not state this wantonly, or without substantial grounds, they humbly beg to call your attention to the following table, all the vouchers for which, are to be found in the journals of your Honorable House, or in different acts of Parliament.

At the Revolution—the Public Revenue did not exceed

2,100,000l.

The Peace Establishment had not exceeded

1,900,000.

The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom and independence of Parliament, to regulate elections, and to prevent frauds, bribery, &c. amounted only to 14

At the death of William III.—the Public Revenue had increased to about

3,900,000.

The Peace Establishment had increased to about

1,950,000.

The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to 26

At the death of Queen Anne—the Public Revenue had increased to about

6,000,000.

The Peace Establishment had increased to about

2,000,000.

The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to 35

At the death of George I.—the Public Revenue had increased to about

6,800,000.

The Peace Establishment had increased to about

2,600,000.

The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to 37

At